

**ACCULTURATIVE STRESS AND ITS IMPACT
ON THE CHRISTIAN ASIAN INDIAN IMMIGRANT COUPLE**

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ABSTRACT

Asian Indian immigrants are drawn to the United States mainly due to the emphasis on education in the Indian culture. Asian Indians are found to be present in large numbers in professional fields such as medicine, technology, and engineering. An overall growth rate of the Asian Indian community in the United States was 106 percent between 1990-2000 alone, making it the largest in the Asian community next to Chinese community. It is all the more important to study the effects of immigration and acculturative stress on the first-generation Asian Indian couples' marital health. Most first generation Asian Indian immigrants often face daily hassles encountered by challenges due to the immigration process and acculturation.

The challenges and the effects of acculturation are holistic and include mental, emotional, spiritual, physical, and social adjustments. Each challenge increases the amount of stress. The process of how the Asian Indian couples handle, cope with and adapt to the stress will determine whether or not their marital health will be strengthened or weakened.

This thesis lays out an integrated therapy approach to counseling that is sensitive to the unique Indian culture and is appropriate to use for the first generation Asian Indian couple, considering their family genealogy. This thesis also integrates biblical approaches to help to find a sustainable coping strategy, adaptation, and resilience to acculturative stressors for Indian immigrants who are Christian.

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

The population of the Asian Indian in the United States is one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the country (Barnes & Bennett, 2002). The US Census Bureau data report from 2013 suggests that there are approximately 2,061,000 Asian Indian immigrants workers in the United States, making it the second most common destination for Asian Indian immigrants next to the United Arab Emirates (Kumar & Dhyani, 1996). Many of these immigrants come under the H-1B visa category as temporary high-skilled workers, employed in specialty occupations in the United States (Zong & Batalova, 2017). About half of the Indian immigrants in the United States go through the long and tedious process of gaining lawful permanent residency, also known as a receiving a green card.

Immigration

Immigration has been defined as the action of coming to live permanently in a foreign country (Oxford Dictionary, 2012). The process of immigration is a significantly stressful event contributing to major life changes and transitions within the individual's and the family's lifestyle (Lavee & Krivosh, 2012). Immigration requires individuals to make some fundamental changes and may cause serious psychological issues, as it can be a very difficult and unique experience for those who go through it (Walsh & Shulman, 2007). Although findings relating to rates of mental disorders in immigrants are inconsistent (Ataca & Berry, 2002), immigrants have been considered to be at a high-risk for psychological disturbances (Farver, Narang & Badha, 2002a). As these disturbances seem more common among the immigrant population, it could be the result of the process of immigration and acculturative stress.

Immigration can also affect an individual's physical, personal, and professional system. Psychological issues may include feeling a sense of isolation and intense loneliness; grieving the loss of old values and accommodating and accepting new ones; and making adjustments to climate changes and lifestyle (Lavee & Krivosh, 2012). Migration to a new society exerts a significant impact on the couple's life and relationships (King, 1993; McGoldrick & Preto, 1984). It involves stressful reorganization of the family and some relational risks by related stressors and may cause serious psychological issues for those who go through it (Walsh & Schulman, 2007). The migration process brings to the surface the need of each spouse to define his or her cultural identity, values, and symbols to ease the cultural change and ensure cultural continuity. After immigration, ethnic differences between the spouses may be reflected in the gaps between their native culture and that of the host country and differences in their rates of personal and social adjustment. Such differences may intensify interpersonal conflicts and threaten the stability of the marital health.

The most noticeable effect of immigration on physical and mental health is also associated with discrimination and acculturative stress (Lam et al., 2012; Gee, Spencer, Chen, & Takeuchi, 2007; Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987; Goto, Gee & Takeuchi, 2002). Age of immigration (Lam, et al., 2012; Angel, Buckley & Sakamoto, 2001; Takeuchi et al., 1998; Takeuchi, Hong, Gile, & Algeria, 2007), age of the immigrant (Lam, Yip & Gee, 2012; Kuo, Chung, & Joseph, 2008; Carstensen, Issacowitz, & Charles, 1999), and social status (Lam, et al., 2012; Hu, Alder, Goldman, Weinstein, & Seeman, 2005) are other significant factors which were found to influence the impact of immigration on health. Lam et al., (2012) found that age of immigration and age of the

immigrant affected physical health, stating that those who immigrated at a later life stage had poorer health outcomes than those who immigrated at a younger age. Their analysis also showed that perceived difference in social status was also a significant factor in identifying how well an individual could acculturate to a new environment. Their findings also suggested that immigrants who perceived a decline in their social status after immigration also experienced a significant decline regarding their health.

Also, like all families, immigrant families undergo the typical stresses of major life-cycle changes, such as births, leaving home, illness and deaths. Migration disrupts family stability and poses a struggle to regain continuity in the midst of new challenges and opportunities. Gregory Batson (1994) observes that for immigrants ambiguity becomes their bend of life and cannot be eliminated. In his apt metaphor he notes, “They are called to join in a dance whose steps must be learned along the way” (p.10).

The purpose of this study is to understand the impact of acculturative stress on the Asian Indian couples’ marital health and the resources needed for coping, adaptation and resilience. We will do this by focusing on a case study of an Asian Indian immigrant couple over a four-year span and unpack the impact of acculturative stress on their marital relationship as they face pressure from their family of origin, host culture, and surrounding community, as well as financial and educational challenges.

Acculturation

Acculturation is defined as the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place while adapting to cross-cultural contact between two or more cultural groups and their members (Berry, 2005). The term “acculturation” describes the adjustment process of individuals when two cultures come into contact with each other

(Sayegh & Lasry, 1993). Acculturation has roots in archeology, where it appeared in the late 19th century writings of J. W. Powell (Rudmin, 2003). It is a significant concept for exploration considering the rapid globalization, expansion of trading, the meshing of borders, and favorable political relations between countries that allow for increasing population contacts and transfers (Berry, 2005). Acculturation results when two or more independent cultures continuously encounter each other, rendering subsequent changes and adaptations to either or both cultures (Berry, 1997; Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936). Acculturation occurs on two levels. Individual beliefs and values might change due to the cultural contact of an inside group member to members of the dominant culture (i.e., psychological change). Groups can also change when common beliefs shared among group members are modified to provide a responsive context for the experiences of individual members (i.e., cultural change) (Grzywacz, Rao, & Gentry, 2009).

The process of acculturation for various groups in culturally plural societies have been studied by Berry and his colleagues (Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989; Berry & Sam, 1997; Berry, Trimble, & Olmedo, 1986). Berry states that this process involves changes in individuals as well as larger social structures and institutions. He enumerates many variables that play a role in acculturation, such as characteristics of the immigrant and host societies, as well as individual variables such as demographics, the reason for immigrating, social support, the experience of discrimination, and individual personality characteristics. Kim and Berry (1986) explored the five types of changes that occur in individual immigrants who come into contact with the host culture. They stated that changes occur in physical (housing, environment), biological (nutrition, disease), cultural, social, and psychological spheres (values, ideas, shifts in mental health).

According to Berry (2005), mutual adaptations to change can take place gradually and amicably, but at times the need for adaptation can create cultural conflict and acculturative stress. Acculturation is also dependent on many factors apart from personal and psychological ones. Berry (1997) found that situational variables include socio-political context and other demographic factors that might affect the process of adapting, and personal ones such as psychological adaptation.

Acculturation can have a huge effect on individual levels of stress, feelings of self-worth and sense of belonging to the community (Rogler, 1989). One of many stressors in the acculturation process is the lowering of socioeconomic status that may occur due to immigration (Sandhu & Cortes, 1996). Host countries may not recognize the qualifications that immigrants arrive with; immigrants may be forced to work in under-paying jobs despite their education and training (Hans, 2001). It can cause stress for the provider as well as for families that may have to adjust their finances (Sandhu & Cortes, 1996). These types of difficulties affect the acculturation process and thus the acculturation strategies that immigrants embrace (Hans, 2001).

Several studies have found that from a developmental perspective, the process of acculturation itself can be a stressful life event for both individuals and families (Kiang, Grzywacz, Marin, Arcury, & Quandt, 2010). It can trigger interpersonal conflicts due to the acculturation gap between married partners. It can destabilize the family status quo, modify the family structure, change personal values, and shift gender role expectations (Berry, 1980; Espin, 1987; Gil, Vega, & Dimas, 1994; Smart & Smart, 1995). Studies have indicated that some of the common stressors involved in cultural adjustment stem

from family conflicts, loss of social support, and learning the new language (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007; Padilla & Borrero, 2006).

Accumulation of these stressful factors has inspired scholars to contemplate the relationship between the acculturation process and the experience of stress. This has led to the conceptualization of “acculturative stress” (Berry, 2006; Padilla & Borrego, 2006). Studies have indicated that acculturative stress is linked with the experience of conflict at both familial and cultural levels along with psychological distress (Flores et al., 2004). Acculturative stress can be either a positive or negative force in an immigrant’s life. For instance, low levels of acculturative stressors may enable an individual to adjust to their new environment, whereas a high level of acculturative stress can lead to significant psychological issues (Umana-Taylor & Alvaro, 2009). Additionally, studies have indicated that a higher level of acculturative stress is associated with: 1) psychological distress, 2) psychopathology (e.g., depressive symptoms, suicidal ideation), 3) decreased physical health, 4) alcohol and substance abuse, 5) family issues, (6) marital problems, 7) lower quality of life, and 8) eating disorder (Arbona et. al., 2010; Finch and Vega, 2003; Hovey, 2000; Negy et al., 2010; Rodriguez, Myers, Mira, Flores, & Garcia-Hernandez, 2002).

John Berry (1979) proposed a bidimensional model that defines acculturation as “the degree to which one maintains one’s culture of origin and the extent to which one participates in the mainstream culture” (p.123). This model recognized acculturation as a process by which individuals negotiates dominant cultural values while deciding to maintain native cultural values or not (Berry, 1997). Berry’s (1994; 2001) model includes four types of acculturation strategies: Integration, Assimilation, Separation, and

Marginalization. Integration involves having a strong relationship between both cultures, that is, having the willingness to be accommodating of both cultures and having good social support in both cultures. According to Berry, this strategy is regarded as most effective to maintain a great quality of life. Marginalization refers to those people who have a connection neither with their native nor the mainstream cultural group. This strategy is viewed as the least adaptive as those experiencing it are isolated and are outcasts from both social groups (Farver et al., 2002b). Immigrants are said to use the assimilation strategy when they conform to the culture of the host society while showing low assimilation to their native culture. They are stressed psychologically due to messages from their native culture to refrain from conforming to the host culture. Finally, those who adopt the separation strategy are disconnected from the host culture to maintain their native culture (Berry, 1997). Asian Indian immigrants using the separation strategy often face hardship as they are unable to function optimally due to difficulty speaking the language or understanding specific accents.

Berry concludes that those immigrants who can integrate or develop a bicultural identity experience decreased acculturative stress and anxiety, and have a chance of developing significantly fewer psychological problems than those who are marginalized, separated or assimilated. LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1993) added to Berry's (2001) acculturative framework by introducing the concept of bicultural efficacy. They suggested that individuals can gain bicultural competency if they are able to process skills in both cognitive and affective areas. Patel and colleagues (1996) hypothesized that biculturalism is a more adaptive acculturation strategy for members of the Asian Indian community, as they tend to hold on to traditions at home and adopt host culture norms in

the workplace. Studies suggest that the use of separation, marginalization, and assimilation strategies of acculturation all reported raised stress levels in Asian Indian immigrants (Krishnan & Berry, 1992; Oommen, 1996).

Acculturative stress is not a deterministic force upon every single immigrant. It may not occur to a harmful degree for those individuals who can cope effectively with acculturation challenges and make genuine adjustments to cultural discrepancies posed by the host culture. However, those individuals who find that demands for cultural adaptation are beyond their ability to adjust could experience acculturative stress (Goforth et al., 2014). Extensive changes required in the intercultural context can result in stress-inducing conflict. Pressures to acculturate are experienced differently across individuals and for some, may create an intra- and interpersonal stress syndrome referred to as acculturative stress (Rodriguez, Myers, Mira, Flores, & Garcia-Hernandez, 2002).

Empirical studies have identified multiple factors associated both positively and negatively with acculturative stress. For instance, higher levels of social support (Mirsky, 2009; Zhan & Goodson, 2011), family cohesion (Dillon & De La Rosa, 2013), and ethnic identity (Hurwich-Reiss et al., 2015) have been found to be related to lower levels of acculturative stress. In contrast, overall cultural dissimilarities (Eustace, 2007), general life stressors (Dona & Berry, 1994), a perceived absence of choice to have immigrated (Hovey, 1999), and the experience of racism and perceived discrimination (Cook et al., 2009) have shown to be correlated with higher levels of acculturative stress.

FAMILY STRESS

Boss (2002, 2006) and others (Price, Price, & McKenry, 2010) conceptualize family stress as a force or pressure that disturbs family homeostasis. It is a systems-based

concept that plays out in families as living social organisms as they experience change and seek stability maintenance of the status quo. Stress is a normal aspect of family experience across the lifespan and requires inevitable changes and adaptations within the family system (Boss, 2002). A family reaction to an encountered stress is determined by how effectively a family either responds or copes to stress via utilizing all available resources (McKenry & Price, 2005; Wilmoth & Smyser, 2009). Usually family stress leads to a problematic scenario when the level of stress exceeds both the individual and family's collective resources, leading to disruption within the family system (Boss, 2002; Hobfoll & Spielberger, 2003; McKenry & Price, 2005; Wilmoth & Smyser, 2009).

Family stress theory highlights the impact of acculturative stress on one's level of functionality within family system (marital distress) and how utilizing resources such as social support can buffer its impact at the micro-level of the Asian Indian family, i.e., within the marital relationship. According to Hill's (1958) ABC- X Family stress model, after a stressor event depletes the resources, each member of the family will be unable to fulfill their roles effectively, and the couple encounters a phase of the crisis. In the state of crisis, family equilibrium is overwhelmingly disturbed, which in turn incapacitates and paralyzes the functionality of the family. A family crisis would lead to a change in the role patterns and expectations within the family system, resulting in "slowed up affectional and emotion-satisfying performances" (Hill, 1958, p. 146). Subsequently, the collective family's physical, psychological, and spiritual health declines, and negatively impacts marriage and family members' function (Wilmoth & Smyser, 2009).

Asian Indian immigrant couples in the United States encounter to one degree or another the loss, and grief that are characteristic of the migration experience (Falicov,

1998). Migration is large and complex as it brings losses of all kinds. For the immigrants, it is the loss of family members, friends, familiar language, the customs, rituals, food, music. Despite the loss and grief caused by physical, social and cultural uprooting, the couple also gains other things. Boss (2006) labeled this phenomenon as “boundary ambiguity”. In such situations, migration loss causes stress due to lack of readiness to migrate and constant ambivalence about the decision, feeling torn between family loyalties, and obligations to family members left behind. All these losses cause multiple stresses and a remarkable mix of emotions, for example, sadness, fear, guilt, and shame that makes grieving incomplete and ambiguous. Boss (2006) calls it a “crossover” (p. 302), in that it has elements of both types of ambiguous loss. Although beloved people and places are left behind, they remain keenly present in the psyche of the immigrant; at the same time, homesickness and the multiple stresses of adaptation may leave some family members emotionally unavailable to support and encourage others.

Asian Indian Immigrants’ Cultural Context

Acculturation does not occur in social isolation; rather it occurs at a given time and place in the cultural context of both Asian Indian immigrants and their host society (Brown & Gaetner, 2001). It is therefore meaningless to speak of acculturation if both contexts under which the two groups are in contact are not understood (Berry, 2006). It is crucial that these cultural contexts are distinctly identified before any meaningful understanding of acculturation can be reached (Sam & Berry, 2006).

It is important to understand the Asian Indian diverse cultural context. India, as one nation within the Asian sub-continent, has a population that exceeds one billion and is composed of more than 29 states (Kurian-Philip, 2007). The Asian Indian population

represents a mosaic of cultures, at least six religions, as well as more than 16 different major languages (Kurian-Philip, 2007). Including identifying with a specific religion, Indians may also identify with a specific geographical region or state in India. While religion may guide their worship and daily behavior, the region often influences one's language, clothes, literature, arts and diet (Medora, 2003). The religious diversity of the Indian population comprises 80.5% Hindu, 13.4% Muslim, 2.3% Christian, and 2% Sikh (India Election Statistics, 2009). Not surprisingly, Asian Indians are the most diverse of all multicultural groups in the United States according to the 2010 U.S Census information.

Religious background and the caste system play an influential role in the lives of Asian Indian couples and families (Hodge, 2004). In India, like most collectivist cultures, marriages are often arranged by the parents or a matchmaker, and dating is not practiced or encouraged (Juvva & Bhatti, 2006; Rosenthal, 1988). Asian Indian couples are typically uncomfortable with the notion of dating. One of the major mate selection patterns is said to be "arranged marriages" in which parents look for religious and caste endogamy as the primary criterion for the marriage (Mullatti, 1995). This practice is widespread through all castes as there is often the belief that couples from the same ethnic background would be more compatible than those from different castes or ethnic groups. Also, occupational, cultural, and economic compatibility is also taken into consideration (Pillari, 2005; Rosenthal, 1988). Yelsma and Athrapidly (1998) identified certain criteria that most Indian families look for while selecting a suitable partner. They include religion, character, education, dowry amount, appearance, skin tone,

employment, caste or sub-caste, locality or geographical distance, financial status, and family reputation.

For the Christian immigrant community, church has historically been a place where newcomers regroup with people from similar backgrounds (Harney, 1991). The immigrant church adapts Christian beliefs to ethnic practices. In addition to providing support, community-building is a common thread that is found across the Asian Indian immigrant church. Asian Indian Christian immigrants use social activities as a starting place to develop relationships through a network of Christian churches; whereas, Hindu Asian Indian immigrants drive for many miles to visit the temple or to attend a religious function (Namaan, 2001).

Asian Indian Immigrants' Marriage & Acculturation

Despite cultural diversities and religious influences on Asian Indian marriages, there are common characteristics of Asian Indian immigrant marriages, such as arranged marriages, patriarchal hierarchies, sharp division of gender roles, orthodox sexual standards, and a strong emphasis on pride and shame, that regulates family interactions (Abudabbeh, 1998; Nassar-McMillan, Ajrouch & Hakim-Larson, 2014). Most of the aforementioned characteristics stem from the collectivistic culture of Asian countries. They often conflict with Western values of egalitarianism in relationships and may contribute to marital conflict for some Asian Indian immigrant couples (Abbott, Springer & Hollist, 2008; Nassar-McMillan & Hakim-Larson, 2003).

India's multi-racial, multilingual and multi-religious heritage extends to 2500 years and has rich traditions regarding marriage (Mullati, 1995). The immigration and acculturation process holds a potential threat to the hierarchical power relationship that

exists between Asian Indian spouses from collectivist societies. The power relationship between spouses are typically measured in two ways: with the division of household tasks, and patterns of decision-making (Haddad & Lam, 1994; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992; Richmond, 1976; Vazques-Nuttall, Romero-Garcia & de Leon, 1988; Ybarra, 1982). The double burden of housework and employment is exhausting and can take a serious toll on marital health and well-being.

Though there seems to be some research in the field of marital satisfaction among Asian Indians living in India, there is a gap in the literature about the possible changes in marital satisfaction among those first-generation couples who have immigrated to the United States. This thesis seeks to address this gap.

A partner's personal experience of satisfaction or happiness with a marital relationship has been referred to as marital satisfaction (Wolf, 1996). It also refers to an individual's subjective evaluation of the quality of a relationship (Crawford, 2002). Changing marital expectations have been found to contribute to marital satisfaction among Indo-Pakistani couples (Ahmad & Reid, 2008). In fact, Siddique (1983) found that Indo-Pakistani couples who immigrated to Canada had to depend more on each other, making them rely on their spouses more than on their extended families. Hence, there was an increased expectation of companionship among these couples compared to those in India and Pakistan. Research also found that these couples evaluate their marital satisfaction based on expression of affection, mutual compatibility, companionship and leisure time, interpersonal trust, and self-disclosure (Ahmad & Reid, 2008; Desai, 1991; Siddiqui, 1983; Singh & Kanjirathinkal, 1999). In addition, aspects which were unique to their cultural background such as religiosity, financial security, educational/occupational

status, parental acceptance, family reputation, social approval and public image of a happy marriage (Ahmad & Reid, 2008; Desai, 1991; Goodwin & Cramer, 2000; Kurian, 1974; Lalonde, Hynie, Pannu & Tatla, 2004; Vaidyanathan & Naidoo, 1991) were also key factors that defined marital satisfaction.

Moreover, in-laws and extended kin were also found to affect marital adjustment and stability (Goodwin & Kramer, 2000; Kurian, 1974). Sastry (1999), after researching married couples in India, found that education, income, age, and full-time work were the factors affecting Indian men's home satisfaction, whereas women found more satisfaction in fulfilling their traditional roles as homemakers. This can be understood because Asian Indian women from a young age are socialized to be subservient to their male counterparts who are socialized to be powerful (Dasgupta, 1998; Khandelwal, 2001). The discrepancy in role socialization can also lead to some women internalizing their marital distress due to incongruent communication between the partners (Talbani & Hasanali, 2000).

Marital satisfaction for immigrants is also dependent on the process of mate selection, that is, whether they have had an 'arranged' marriage or married autonomously (i.e., free of cultural expectations). It was found that couples in arranged marriages reported less marital satisfaction compared to those in autonomous marriages (Lev-Wiesel & Al-Krenawi, 1999). In a study conducted on Chinese couples, Xiaohe and Whyte (1990) found that women in autonomous marriages were consistently more satisfied with their marital relationship than women in arranged marriages.

Kumar and Dhyani (1996) conducted a study in India to examine the effect of the type (arranged vs. autonomous) of marriage on marital duration, sexual satisfaction, and

marital adjustment among married Indian women. No significant relationship existed between the type of marriage on marital or sexual satisfaction, and there were no differences in the way the couples communicated with each other verbally and non-verbally. Couples in arranged marriages were found to have decreased verbal communication compared to couples in autonomous marriages. Arranged marriages are also reported to be linked to patriarchy. In comparison to those individuals in autonomic or wife-dominated families, those in husband-dominated families reported higher marital satisfaction and lower marital distress (Shukla & Kapoor, 1990). Many young Asian Indian immigrants internalize the American values and look at choosing a marriage partner as their own independent choice rather than fulfilling societal expectations (Khandelwal, 2002). This may end up affecting their relationship with their parents and the expectations put on them may cause conflict (Farver et al., 2002b) which might put a strain on the couple after they are married.

In addition, gender roles play a significant role in marital satisfaction in the Asian Indian culture. Asian Indian immigrant women are sensitive to the fact that their employment can be perceived as a threat by their spouses, and are, therefore, concerned with protecting their spouses' egos (Gilad, 1984; Pessar, 1986). Some studies have reported that employed Asian Indian women explicitly try to make their husbands feel that they are the head of the family so as to protect the man's honor and maintain family harmony (Gilad, 1984). Studies also suggest that Asian Indian immigrant couples do experience conflict regarding control of the wife's earnings, the division of labor, and decision-making (Meintel et al, 1984; Pessar, 1986).

Collectivist cultures like Asian Indian, place a strong emphasis on the nature of the relationship between parents and children (Kim, Kim & Hurh, 1991). In fact, the bond between parent and child is expected to supercede that between spouses or between siblings (Kim, Hurh & Kim, 1993; Triandis et al., 1988). Marriage is viewed in the lens of the social and material benefits it brings to the two families, rather than that of a romantic love relationship and personal fulfillment (Long, 1985; Dion & Dion, 1996).

The difference in basic philosophy between Eastern and Western cultures can cause significant conflicts between spouses and their families. Raising children in an environment which is contrary to their native style can also cause significant stress in the marital relationship. Children are expected to avoid behaving in a way that could bring shame to their family and be respectful and obedient to parents (Harrison, Serafica & McAdoo, 1984; Stopes-Roe & Cochrane, 1990; Sung, 1985; Xenocostas, 1991). As adults, children are expected to continue placing their responsibilities to their families ahead of their desires. Consequently, immigrant parents fear that their children will acquire objectionable aspects of the new culture and that their children will lose their native culture (Wakil, Siddique & Wakil, 1981; Xenocostas, 1991). At the same time, however, immigrants actively encourage their children to acquire the characteristics of the new culture which will lead to success (Baptiste, 1993; Markowitz, 1994).

The potential for conflict is especially prominent in adolescence, where the issues of separation and individuation, identity, and gender role formation are most likely to bring a family conflict to the surface (Baptiste, 1993; Lee, 1988). The Asian Indian couples would like to see their children achieve behavioral acculturation in order to be successful, but to also retain many of the traditional values and show respect for their

parents' values to get support and approval. As such, separation and individuation are therefore complex. Baptiste (2005) suggests that immigrant parents may struggle to raise children because of differing cultural expectations for children in the United States compared to their home country. The immigration experience may increase levels of stress for Asian Indian couples. Girls may come to resent the inequality they perceive within their family, but still feel bound to adhere to familial expectations. Unable to take action to resolve the conflict between their behavioral and value acculturation, immigrant girls and women can express their dissatisfaction by deciding to raise their daughters differently (Gilad, 1984).

Asian Indian couples are encouraged to work hard to resolve marital disputes. Yet they may encounter a lack of support. For example, it is recommended that married couples reach out to their families of origin when experiencing marital challenges. However, many Asian Indian couples do not have access to these resources because their extended family remains in their country of origin and their social support network is limited. Even though seeking marital therapy from professionals appears to be an option, studies have indicated that they are hesitant and often resistant to obtaining professional support because of pervasive doubts about mainstream counselors' or psychotherapists' cultural sensitivity and competency (Reddy, 2007; Hodge, 2005). Some mainstream American psychotherapists' lack of understanding about Asian Indian couples' religious values and cultural beliefs might also hinder the process of therapy (Daneshpour, 1998). Some couples may also be afraid that American therapists might unconsciously stigmatize their values and perspectives. The manner in which the Asian Indian couples

adjust to their new culture suggests that acculturation is a gradual and multifaceted process which may cause stress and therefore stress the marital relationship.

Asian Indian Immigrant & Differentiation of Self

Although there are no studies that specifically link differentiation of self and Asian Indians, Bowen's (1978) concepts can certainly be applied to the Asian Indian immigrant couples. Skowron's (2000) research confirmed Bowen's (1978) hypotheses: namely, that highly differentiated individuals enjoy greater emotional intimacy and increased marital satisfaction, while individuals with low differentiation experience discontent and have higher levels of marital distress. It is imperative that the increase in differentiation of self in Asian Indian immigrant couple will result in higher efficacy in handling acculturative stressors within their marriage. However, a decrease in the differentiation of self will result in lower efficacy in dealing with acculturative stressors, increased levels of non-secure attachment and marital distress. We will further discuss the concept of differentiation in chapter 3.

Thesis-Project Design

This thesis-project is a case study of an Asian Indian immigrant couple, Vinod, and Rani, over a four-year span. The purpose is to examine the impact of acculturative stress on the couple's marital and family health. The couple in this case study was experiencing a level of dissatisfaction at home which often resulted in tension in their marriage. I have primarily adopted an integrated approach, using different techniques from various approaches.

In Emotionally-Focused Couple therapy (Johnson, 2004), the therapist assists the couple in "restructuring and shaping interaction" (Johnson, 2004, p. 96). Once

interactions are restructured, couples should be able to better communicate the universal emotions of anger, fear, surprise, joy, shame, disgust, hurt, anguish, and sadness.

Solution-Focused Brief therapy (Berg et al., 1986) focuses on the couple's specific issue and promotes positive change, rather than dwelling on the issue or past problems. The couple will be encouraged to focus positively on their strengths and resources and to set goals to achieve them. The following assessment tools have also been employed in the case study:

- The Differentiation of Self Inventory-Revised measures the levels of differentiation of self.
- The Social, Attitudinal, Familial, and Environmental Acculturative Stress Scale examines the couple's acculturative stressors in four domains, i.e., familial, social, attitudinal, and environmental to further address the couple's marital health.
- Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale assesses the level of consensus in decision making, satisfaction with the expression of affection, common interests and activities shared by the couple, and satisfaction in the relationship concerning stability and conflict regulation.

Outcomes

Most Asian Indians consider moving to the United States without anticipating some of the serious challenges that can emerge because of the acculturative process that ensues from immigration. This study can help immigrants prepare themselves better and can assist those already living in the United States to become aware of changes caused in

their relationship and the demands placed on them by their families by gaining knowledge about the stressors and the challenges caused by living in a different culture.

Individuals who are in the process of immigration or acculturation perceive support structure as the primary protector against marital distress. Therefore, it is vital to provide culturally competent therapy to the underserved Asian Indian immigrant population. This therapy must be administered by a culture-sensitive counselor or a trained staff who understands the difficulties facing immigrant families, and be able to offer helpful solutions.

The outcome of this thesis will be to take another step forward on the trail that the Asian Indian immigrant couples have blazed. The goal is to capture and unpack the breadth and depth of the felt marital and family needs of Asian Indian couples and craft a proposal for a curriculum for the Asian Indian immigrant community that can be used in churches or religious organizations. The purpose of this ministry is to provide competent, empathetic congregational support for those Asian Indian couples who are struggling in marriage and family. It will also seek to connect, support and encourage immigrant couples and offer invaluable psychological resources integrated with God's truth, particularly in coping, strategy, adaptation, and resilience for healthy, enriched marriages and family relationships. The purpose is not to take over viable ministries led by capable people or to force a ministry to fit into a preconceived mold. It is imperative that leaders recognize the urgency and expand on new venues of family ministry or marriage enrichment ministry in their respective ministries where there would be inclusion and participation of Asian Indian immigrant couples or couples from other ethnic groups.

CHAPTER TWO - THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

In this Chapter, we will develop a theological framework of marriage for the immigrant couple and their family. By examining the creation of man and woman, and God's beautiful design for marriage in Genesis 1-2, we will discuss how this design informs our current understanding of marriage. Then, in Genesis 3, we will delve into the fall which distorted God's design. After that, we will examine the restoration of God's design for marriage at the cross, and the centrality of Jesus' death and resurrection to a renewed call for marriage as participation in the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18-21).

Theology of Marriage

God created man and woman in his image (Gen 1:17). This suggests that they are of equal value. As Beck (2005) puts it, "Their joint creation as *Imago Dei* suggests the personal and spiritual equality of the sexes, while allowing for their complementarity psychologically and functionally" (p. 150). Dale Moody (1981) states that "Man's most distinctive quality is the image of God by which He has dominion over all other creatures and the whole of God's creation" (p. 226). While the image of God may be viewed as humanity's mandate to exercise dominion over creation, another common interpretation is that the image is the human ability to make moral decisions (Bromiley, 1988). Furthermore, others consider the image of God to be the capacity to have a relationship with God (Brunner, 1976).

Humanity's value is stressed as early in Scripture as Genesis 1:26, where God says, "Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness." God created man and women intentionally, meaningfully, and purposefully. Humankind is the masterpiece of

divine design. McDonald (1981) points out that “human beings are creatures of infinite worth; presented as the supreme object of God's concern” (p. 2). Man is the “highest of God's earthly creatures,” and is created in His image; men and women enjoy supreme value (Erickson, 1983, p. 456). As image-bearers of God (Gen 1:26-27), humanity existed naked and unashamed, in a perfect creation, in the fullness of life, focused on the will of God (Pope John Paul II, 2006).

Having created Adam and Eve in his image, and placed them in community with himself and one another, God gave them their directives as a means of living out their primary calling to love God and love each other. God allowed man and woman to have the freedom to live out their purpose freely. However, God ordained Adam and Eve with specific responsibilities: to be fruitful, increase in number, fill the earth, subdue it, rule over the fish and the birds and “every living creature that moves on the ground” (Gen 1:28). Dominion was given to humanity over the rest of the creation. Adam and Eve were called to act as partners with God in caring for and ruling over creation. The focus of the first family was on God.

Furthermore, God designed marriage for humanity. The National Association of Evangelicals (2015) defines marriage as a God-ordained, covenant relationship that is sexually exclusive between a man and a woman. It brings children into the world and sustains the stewardship of the earth. This biblical relationship displays the relationship between God and His people and is marked by faithfulness, sacrificial love, and joy. There was a union of the spiritual and the physical in the garden, and God was in their midst (Pope John Paul II, 2006). It is this indescribable union that Paul calls a “profound mystery” (Eph 5:32). The relationship between the man and woman reflects Christ's

relationship with his bride, the church. It is a relationship punctuated by a holistic existence wrapped in the will of God that gives meaning and purpose to the man and woman's life (Levene, 1951). The beauty of the design of marriage, as the communion of man and woman with God at the center, is found in Genesis 2:25. Scriptures describe the first marriage as lacking shame (Gen 2:25). Adam and Eve were able to be in a covenant union with one another that gloriously displayed their equality and differences. Marital discord and conflict did not enter into the first union until after sin came into the world.

From the beginning, God has had a covenantal relationship with his imperfect people, steadfastly committing to them, loving them, and willingly laying down his life for them, even to the point of death on the cross. By making a covenant, he makes an unwavering promise to love and care for his people—even though they may fail him, be unfaithful, or grow cold in their love for him. Marriage models this steadfast love in a covenant relationship where two people commit themselves to one another, and promise to be faithful and sacrificially loving until death. This covenant holds husband and wife together through purifying fires and leads to growth and maturity. What seems to be important is the commitment of the two individuals to each other.

God's intent for human relations was to place man and a woman in a family by establishing a monogamous union (Gen 2:21-24). His purpose of creation entails that families are the first relationship by which we "image" God. However, we can see the effects of sin as a result of the fall in the first family. The incompleteness and sinfulness of others have an impact on us in our family relationships. There are also effects of our sin in our family relationships. However, we see God's work of redemption in the family. The family, which is incomplete and fallen, is still part of God's provision to care for and

provide a place for persons to grow into greater maturity (Yarhouse & Sells, 2008, p. 22-23).

As Gary Thomas in *Sacred Marriage* (2000) points out, “the real transforming work of marriage is the twenty-four hours-a-day, seven-day-a-week commitment. It is the crucible that grinds and shapes us into the character of Jesus Christ” (p. 22). Thomas goes on to explain that happiness and holiness are not mutually exclusive, but our culture’s emphasis on personal happiness over mutual holiness is devastating to an understanding of marriage as a joint vocational pursuit. Second, within that context, marriage becomes the vessel in which couples grow in holiness together, while participating in reconciling creation back to God through their life in Christ. It is the purposeful reorientation of life toward discipleship, commitment, intimacy, grace, forgiveness, and love. It is an outward manifestation of covenant living and the means by which a husband and wife become “salt and light” (Matt 5:13-16) to the world around them.

The primary calling of all Christians is to love God and love their neighbor (Matt 22:34-40). How a person lives out this calling is dependent upon how the calling intersects with his or her position in life. Our relationship with God reflects our interaction with our fellow humans. As image bearers of God, the way we interact with others reveals how fully conformed we are to the likeness of God. “If anyone says, ‘I love God’ but hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen” (1 Jn 4:20). One’s position in life becomes the medium through which the primary calling is lived out (Hart & Hart, 1984). For some, it will be through singleness, for others, it will be through marriage

(Bolin, 1995). For those who are married, without a doubt, their spouse is their most intimate neighbor. The call of marriage is to love God as evidenced by love for one's spouse.

In building a theological foundation from this understanding of primary calling as a directive in marriage, the goal is a balance between striving for the ideal that God puts before us while engaging the reality of a fallen world. It is uncompromisingly living for God, but living in grace, mercy, humility, and forgiveness. It is in this balance that we embrace marriage as the calling of God and as a call to discipleship.

Beautiful Design of Marriage in Creation

Marriage is a relationship designed by God where a man and woman can be a safe-haven for each another. Genesis 1-2 shows that in the beginning, God created humanity to be in a relationship with him and with each other. The first human relationship was not brotherhood or sisterhood, but husband and wife. The primary calling of loving God and loving one's neighbor must be evidenced in the marriage relationship.

Genesis 2:25 elucidates three key truths about marriage. First, marriage involves leaving. The man and the woman are to leave their family of origin to form a new relationship and new family. Second, marriage involves cleaving or joining. The Hebrew word translated "cleave" or "join" means to pursue hard after someone else, and to be glued or stuck to something or someone (Vine, 1996). It indicates a physical and emotional bond between the man and the woman. Third, marriage involves becoming one flesh. In this way, the marriage relationship resembles the Godhead relationship. Just as the three Persons of the Godhead are one God, so the two are one flesh. We must see the

concept of "one flesh" as the communal nature of marriage in light of God's call to love him and love our neighbor. Marriage is a unique participation in the divine mystery of a holistic oneness between man, woman, and God that reflects Christ's relationship with the church (Eph 5:21-33).

God's original intention for marriage is to be a place where trust, openness, and vulnerability can thrive (Stanley, Trathen, McCain, & Bryan, 2002, p. 13). This relational bond, designed for unity and intimacy, is where two people become one for the rest of their lives. It is a "covenant of spiritual unity in which the souls and hearts of both partners are joined before Him and with Him" (Stanley et al., 2002, p. 15). Creation and the garden of Eden provided a perfect picture of equality, where Adam and Eve ruled the earth without any apparent presence of sin. However, that soon changed.

Distorted Design in the Fall

God commanded Adam not to eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden of Eden (Gen 2:17). Adam's disobedience not only affected humanity's dependence, their responsibility, and accountability to God, but also affected Adam's descendants intellectually, rationally, and spiritually (Isa 1:3; Ps 92:6). It also affected them volitionally; their motives, decisions, and choices were now inclined to sin (Ps 2:1; 1 Pet 2:18-19; Tit 3:3). The fall affected them emotionally—in their desires, feelings, and affections (Eph 2:3; Rom 7:5). Moreover, sin affected humanity morally, particularly regarding ethical life (1 Cor 8:7; Tit 1:15; 1 Tim 4:7). The impact extends to human functioning, behavior, and dominion (Eph 4:19) (Beck & Demarest, 2005). In sum, human nature is weakened, corrupted, and biased towards evil (Job 15:16); and even though the image of God in humans was not destroyed, it was deformed and distorted.

As Genesis 3 points out, Eve made a wrong choice. Eve partook of the forbidden fruit; subsequently, Adam also participated in her disobedience. As a result, the first couple's self-motivated impulses forever fractured their shared calling (Pope John Paul II, 2006; Westermann, 1987). The story of creation was interrupted. Scripture describes how sin found its way into the world (Gen 3), and distorted what God created. When sin entered, everything changed. It left a dark shadow over the whole world, including marriage and family (Bonhoeffer, 2009). Furthermore, the center of the relationship shifted from God to self. When "self" becomes a god, isolation occurs, as multiple ruling systems now compete for dominance. Rather than partnering with God to experience the fullness of life in God, and reflecting the goodness of God, the present reality is a relationship founded on isolation, shame, fear, guilt, blame, framed by seduction away from God, and cursed existence. In the aftermath of this disaster, couples and marriages continue to struggle with the painful consequences of sin. The once equal partnership that focused on perpetuating the goodness of God is now a broken relationship that struggles for dominance, as each partner wants his or her "god of self" to rule. Genesis 3:16 says, "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." Eve no longer enjoyed equality with Adam because he was now the ruler of the household. The God-ordained act of exercising dominion over the animals by naming them (Gen 2:19-20) is applied to Eve as Adam's first act after the fall narrative (Gen 3:20)—the first evidence of the power struggle that now exists.

The heartbreaking and devastating consequence of Adam and Eve's sin was that the goodness that was originally present in the garden of Eden was no longer present. Sin had entered the world and had an immediate effect on the marriage of Adam and Eve.

The first result of Adam and Eve's sinful action was that both experienced shame and a desire to hide. Genesis 3:7 indicates that they experienced shame with one another after realizing they were naked. They responded by hiding their bodies from one another. Scripture shows that Adam and Eve also felt the need to hide from God (Gen 3:8-10), an undoing of Genesis 2:25. The second result of Adam and Eve's sinful action was the projection of blame within a family. A terrible spiral had occurred quickly right after God confronted Adam; Adam and Eve went from everything being good, and feeling no shame to projecting blame onto each other. Another devastating result of Adam and Eve's sin was the entrance of pain and death into the world. Adam also had a confrontational dialogue with God, then followed by banishment experienced by Adam and Eve. Both the confrontational dialogue and banishment indicated a spatial separation from God that was not present in the beginning.

Humans are relational beings created for a relationship with God, with one another, and also the natural world (Roberts, 1997). Sadly, the fall has deeply and negatively affected humanity's relationships. One of the consequences of sin is total separation from and loss of fellowship with God (Gen 3:8-10). Then follows separation between man and woman, accompanied by division and disruption in human families. Sin also infused a sense of shame and guilt, and the need to hide from God and each other (Gen 3:7-8). It brought the notion of fear (Gen 3:10): fear of God and fear of each other. In addition to this, we saw earlier that the concept of casting blame emerges as a result of Adam and Eve's sin (Gen 3:12-13). With Adam blaming Eve, and Eve blaming the serpent, each seeks to evade responsibility and to shift the blame elsewhere. The fall even

affects cognition and reasoning (Beck & Demarest, 2005). Consequently, conflict is present in all kinds of human relationships, in all levels and forms.

As Yarhouse and Sells (2008) state, “Disillusionment, heartbreak, hurt, hopelessness and confusion are common characteristics of couples. It is a pain, injury, tragedy, injustice, and sin that leaves a scar on families who seek therapy.” Also, sin expresses itself in the mistreatment of spouses, children, or family elders, in the form of all kinds of abuse—verbal, emotional, physical, and sexual (Beck & Demarest, 2005). Many marital problems are the consequence of broken promises and lack of commitment. Furthermore, materialism has become central in contemporary culture, leading to pleasure and enjoyment the main goals of existence, resulting, thereby in selfishness (Mathews & Hubbard, 2004).

Balswick and Balswick (2007) suggest that a family relationship can be “dynamic and maturing or stagnant and dying” (p. 21). According to their model, a family that is built on a covenant commitment will be centered on unconditional love. This kind of love provides security, develops grace and leads to growth. The commitment gives the family members the freedom to empower one another and leads to greater intimacy within the family unit, which in turn leads to a deeper covenant. When commitment and involvement are mutual—that is, covenant-loving, grace-based, forgiving and being forgiven, empowered serving and being served, intimate knowing and being known—growth will increase the relationship. However, when this mutuality is lacking, the relationship will stagnate and will be founded on a contract instead of a covenant, and law rather than grace. Possessive power will likely replace empowerment, and distance will replace intimacy. Thus, the relationship within the family is harmed and damaged.

Restored Design at the Cross

The very first couple to sin and fall short of the glory of God was Adam and Eve. As we have seen, their sin had a disastrous effect on their marriage. However, God's love for humankind led him to design a plan of reconciliation. God wants to reconcile humans, first with himself and then with each other, by restoring broken fellowship and healing relationships. Christ's death and resurrection were the bridge to that reconciliation (2 Cor 5:19).

Marriage is considered to be a model of the relationship of the church with Christ, one that is intended to be "through Christ, toward Christ, and in Christ" (Bonhoeffer, 2009, p. 68-70). Marriage is an arena of restoration and transformation (Mathews & Hubbard, 2004), in which God shapes his people to be in his Son's likeness (Rom 8:2). This transformation renews the mind (Rom 12:2), the will (Ps 15:12), the emotions (Gal 5:24), the moral life (1 Pet 1:15-16), and behavior (Rom 6:13,16). Also, it renews the image of God in human persons (Eph 4:24; 2 Pet 1:4). Change within the family occurs when couples set Christ as their example and model, and receive power from him.

According to Paul's words in the book of Romans, Christ's death on the cross atones for sin, including sins displayed within any marriage (Rom 3:25; 4:25). The cross provides the means and power to redeem marriages and families. The lost marital union in Eden is redeemed by the resurrection power of the cross. Paul also wrote, "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them" (2 Cor 5:19). The ministry of Christ's reconciling work also applies to marriage and families. God has reconciled all things to himself. The sin that was present in the garden of Eden and continues to be present within families today is forgiven on the cross. The

reconciling work of the cross provides the means and the power to redeem marriages and families, and if claimed by families and individuals, can overcome shame, overpower the projection of blame, ease the pain of relationships, and re-establish equality and harmony within a marriage and family.

A Renewed Call to Reconciliation

The Christian's empowerment to love God and love our neighbor in a fallen world is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In Genesis 3, we see the beginning of a self-serving, self-gratifying, individualistic isolation that destroys marriages. The reversal brought about by God through Christ is portrayed in 2 Corinthians 5:15, "...he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and raised again." It is a husband and wife's joint call back to a restored relationship with God (2 Cor 5:21) and participation in the new creation. Moreover, we are called to become participants in the resurrection life (Ladd, 1993). Just as Adam and Eve brought death, Christ brings life. Just as sin brought separation, Christ brings unity.

There is a call for active participation in moving creation marred by sin toward participation in the new creation completed at Christ's return. It is a step toward the new creation, similar in its perfection and holistic nature of God, but not the same. It is taking the shattered existence of the present reality and putting the pieces back together. N. T. Wright (2011) explains that if God began this great reversal in Jesus, which is moving us to the end times, then "we now get to share in doing bits that are going to turn into the new creation...we can do re-creation here and now because it has already begun with Jesus" (p. 139).

For Paul, participation in the resurrection life is the same as participation in the ministry of reconciliation, a reorientation of life, a life that is conscious of the new creation (2 Cor 5:16-18). Although Paul's words bear a "message of reconciliation" that is universal in scope (v.19), that message is mediated through "Christ's ambassadors" (v. 20) for the sake of imploring all to come to know reconciliation to God through Christ. Christ stands as the constant reminder of and access to the new creation God has prepared for us (v. 21) (Camp, 2011).

Reconciliation in Christian marriages is intended to facilitate the divine plan for human redemption. The ministry of reconciliation is a means of "holding the vertical and horizontal together" (Brueggemann, 1982, p. 53). Gary Thomas (2000) points out that "marriage is a holy place, the site of a relationship that proclaims God's love to the world" (p. 31). Thomas further adds that in a man-centered view, marriage is sustained by meeting earthly comforts, desires, and expectations. However, in a God-centered view, marriage brings glory to God and points a sinful world to a reconciling Creator. He goes on to state that "as long as I believe in modeling God's love for his church is the primary purpose of marriage, I will enter this relationship and maintain it with an entirely new motivation" (p. 32-33). Paul adds, "So we make it our goal to please him" (2 Cor 5:9).

Since marriage is embraced by the majority of Christians (Thomas, 2000, p. 32-33), marriage must become the central place for reclaiming the primary calling of loving God and loving one's neighbor. A deliberate effort must be made by married couples towards holiness and a holistic, relational existence. In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul points out specific attitudes and actions that reflect this move away from self-pursuant isolation and

back toward the vocational call of marriage. Chief among those characteristics within the context of the ministry of reconciliation is love (v. 14). Love is the foundation on which all else rests. Christ's love offers both the motivation and the boundaries for the ministry of reconciliation. The compulsion of Christ's love is grounded in his willingness to go to the cross and die for all, but also in the power of his resurrection from the dead; the power Paul is now imploring his readers to embrace as they live the resurrection life. Concepts of healing in Christ and forgiveness shine through in verses 17 and 19. By Christ's work on the cross, redemption is available—the redemption of fallen personhood, of the relationship of humans with God and human relationships, including the marital bond.

Within the context of marriage, how would a union that is defined by love, selflessness, unity, submission, humility, healing, and forgiveness look? What would such a union say to one's own family or a couple's community? A marriage that actively participates in the ministry of reconciliation will not just bring a couple closer together; it will also bring the world closer to Christ, and all creation closer to its final redemption. Such a marriage is the restoration of the vocational call inherent in the pre-fall creation and is reclaimed through Christ's death and resurrection.

In today's culture, individualism propels the isolationism of a self-serving god complex, causing it to be very difficult for couples to pursue kingdom vocation. Just like anywhere else, husbands and wives in a family are often caught up in the cultural drive to be individualistic or self-centered, never realizing they are serving the god of "self" and destroying the vocational aspect of their marriage relationship. While potentially serving a good cause, the church often fails to recognize that it is not helping the couples

themselves or the greater call of what they could be doing together participating in life in God.

There has to be a healthy return to an emphasis on the “one flesh” aspect of marriage. It is hard for couples to understand that what one spouse does always affect the other. If he hurts, she hurts. If she is joyful, he is joyful. One’s mindfulness of his or her spouse is the strongest reflection of one’s immersion into the wholeness of God. However, embracing “one flesh” is difficult as marriage is a profound mystery (Eph 5:32). If the church leads couples to embrace the idea of a “one flesh,” and helps husbands and wives see the love for their spouse as their primary channel for reflecting their love for God, then couples will begin to model reconciliation to a broken world. They will live in the resurrection life. Exactly how that is played out will vary from couple to couple. However, the church’s role should be to consistently teach and reaffirm the vocational call, encourage intentionality among married couples to live out the ministry of reconciliation.

Immigrant Couples in Scriptures

Immigrant couples matter to God. Immigrants appear throughout the Scriptures and are referred to as foreigners, strangers, sojourners, or aliens. In fact, the Hebrew word “*ger*” used for a foreigner appears ninety-two times just in the Old Testament (Soerens & Yang, 2011). Many key characters in the Old Testament have crossed borders at one point or another, and therefore, were immigrants.

The patriarch Abraham and Sarah migrated on multiple occasions. They left their homeland following a divine promise that God will make them into a great nation (Gen 11:29; 12:1-3). Rahab, the Canaanite, a Gentile living in Jericho (Jos 2:1) became one of

the five women in the genealogy of Jesus. She was willing to hide the Israelite spies who had come to search out a way to attack and defeat Jericho. Rahab's faith saved her and her family during the complete defeat of Jericho by Joshua's army. Later, her son Boaz, who grew up to become a righteous and godly man, married Ruth (Ruth 2:1).

Elimelech and Naomi present another immigrant story (Ruth 1). When famine ravaged their native land, they migrated to the land of Moab. Elimelech and his sons abruptly pass away. Ruth, their daughter-in-law, follows her mother-in-law, Naomi, to Israel, goes to the fields and finds favor in the eyes of Boaz. In God's divine plan, this immigrant woman goes on to become the grandmother of King David and an ancestor of Jesus.

Like all families, immigrant families undergo major life-cycle changes, such as births, leaving home, illness, loneliness, financial instability, and deaths. These transitions involve stressful reorganization. In virtually every story of immigrant couples in Scripture, we read not just about their trials, heartaches, temptations, and sins, but also about grace, repentance, and growth. As we saw earlier, the sin that was present in the garden of Eden and continues to be present within families today was forgiven on the cross. The cross provides the means and power to redeem immigrant marriages and families. The reconciling work of the cross, if claimed by immigrant couples and individuals within families, can overcome loneliness, guilt, shame, overpower the projection of blame, ease the pain of relationships, and reestablish harmony within marriage so that a sense of continuity, identity and stability can be maintained in the family.

Conclusion

“Scripture begins with creation and concludes with a vision of the wedding-feast of the Lamb” (Ponessa, 2002). Though sin destroyed God’s original design of marriage, the Bible ends with the wedding-feast of the Lamb, where we find the final reconciliation of creation back to God. In Christ, marriage is a renewed call, leading husbands and wives, and all of the creation, back into relationship with God.

At the center of Church's theology of marriage lies the cross of Christ. It makes sense that restoring marriage requires a radical return to God. If men and women are to experience God-intended marriage, they must continually surrender themselves to the grace of redemption. The theology of marriage is transformational. When a couple renounces themselves and takes up their crosses to follow Christ, they can experience the joys of marriage that God zealously wishes to give them.

The Christian view of the family extends far beyond the interconnectedness so often underscored. God does not institute families the same way He describes marriage. A Christian view recognizes that all families are made up of fallen and incomplete individuals and that in all relationships, conflicts are inevitable in a family context. It is in the context of mutual value that couples find themselves with unique opportunities to grow in patience and self-control, helping the person to grow into maturity.

Every marriage, especially every immigrant family, despite its heritage or success, is challenged. It needs to cope with crises brought on by immigration, acculturative stress, pain, injustice, sin, disease, death, financial and economic calamity, childhood hurt, and infidelity. The greatest challenges faced by life in marriage are disillusionment, heartbreak, hurt, despair, loneliness, hopelessness, and confusion.

However, immigrant couples who evidence a strong faith in God through the redemptive acts of Christ and the Holy Spirit can cope more effectively as they use their faith in times of challenge or crisis. They are to consistently model love, forgiveness, partnership, theocentric living, and a host of other behaviors linked to the vocation of marriage as it is lived out through the ministry of reconciliation. God delights in the restoration of people and marriages in whatever small ways that occur. He delights in families that reflect well on their own identity and create a place for family members to be enriched and healthy.

Having ascertained the theological framework of God's design for marriage, the disastrous consequences of sin on the marital relationship, and God's intention to provide restoration to broken marriages, we will now undertake, in chapter 3, a comprehensive literature review of the effects of acculturative stress on immigrant couples.

CHAPTER 3 - LITERATURE REVIEW

Asian Indian immigrant families face unprecedented challenges in a highly stressful, rapidly changing society, with growing complexities in its structure and processes, as well as acculturation challenges. Many Asian Indian immigrant couples live in between their native culture and host culture, without totally fitting in either one. The family dynamics of the Asian Indian immigrants demonstrate the interplay of individual, interpersonal and intergroup influences. Some of the potential sources of family stress are inherent in the acculturation process, by the way in which families negotiate the two cultures or especially when one spouse or a member acculturates more quickly than others. This inherent acculturative stress that families experience reveals a microcosm of both the processes of acculturation and its impact on the immigrant couple's marital health. The drastic increase in the number of Asian Indian immigrants living in the U.S., the increase in marital conflicts and divorce, and the lack of attention to the significant role of acculturative stress, underscore an urgent need for empirical research to enhance the understanding of this phenomenon. Moreover, it is important for research to inform the development and implementation of culturally and contextually relevant couple interventions for this population. To understand and study the Asian Indian world, one needs to apply a historical and sociocultural lens consciously.

Acculturation does not occur in social isolation; rather it occurs at a given time and place in the context of both immigrants and their host society (Brown & Gaetner, 2001). It is therefore meaningless to speak of acculturation if both contexts under which the two groups are in contact are not understood (Berry, 2006). These settings may include the historical, socio-cultural characteristics of the groups along with reasons

underlying the intercultural interaction. It is important to illuminate these contextual factors that provide a critical backdrop to the variables of interest such as acculturative stress, self-differentiation, and marital health.

Contextualizing Historical View of Asian Indian Marriage

Asian Indians are one of the oldest and more traditional societies in the world (Parvi, 2015). India's multi-religious, multilingual, and multiracial heritage extends 2500 years and has rich cultural traditions regarding marriage (Mullatti, 1995). For the most part, families in India have been historically organized according to the patriarchal system where marriage has been husband-dominated regardless of the resources of either the husband or the wife (Sonawat, 2001). In a patriarchal society, strict gender-role norms about what men and women should be and what they should do govern the social life. Many norms follow the rule that men are dominant in status and power, so they should be the protective provider, while women should be obedient and dependent (Chen et al., 2009).

Marriage is the most important and compulsory life cycle among Asian Indians and is not just a union between men and women but also their families. Traditionally, the Asian Indian family system is established for the fulfillment of religious obligations, passing socio-religious traditions to future generations and for begetting a male child (Mullatti, 1995). The families also provide emotional, informational, and economic support by mediating conflicts between couples, not disclosing personal problems to those outside the family (Natrajan & Thomas, 2002).

Asian Indian family systems are complex. The parents perform the task of selecting the spouse (Parvi, 2015). The selection of a spouse is primarily based on the

career of the young adult and is influenced, if not dictated by the family (Parvi, 2015). Once a woman marries, she leaves her family of origin and moves into her husbands' family. At the heart of patriarchy in India is the oppression of women (Johnson & Johnson, 2015). Societies that appear to be heavily patriarchal—male-dominated, male-identified, and male-centered, are the ones in which the women's lives are the harshest. These harsh conditions so often include crimes perpetrated against women by men, including violence and rape (Johnson, 1997). Asian Indian women are expected to be under the control of a man and to serve him without question from their birth to death (Johnson et al., 2001). Female children are believed to belong to their fathers until they are married, at which time they become the property of their husbands (Johnson & Johnson, 2001). Marriage is considered to be the only socially acceptable choice for a woman, as remaining a single would bring disgrace to her family (Gupta, 1999). However, the choice of whom to marry is usually restrictive, as most marriages even today continue to be arranged, with parents playing a pivotal role in finding a suitable match (Harlan & Courtright, 1995). Several researchers have found that many young Indians desire to make their own choices in marriage without being pressured into it due to parental values (Farver et al., 2002a; Vaidyanathan & Naidoo, 1991). Contradictory to this research, Siddique (1983) stated that many Asian Indians accepted their parent's decision to arrange their marriages. However, once married, the woman faced strict gender role expectations that stemmed from cultural expectations of what was considered appropriate feminine behavior, fostering inequality between husbands and wives.

The Asian Indian culture affects the concept and the development of the self within which it develops. Roland describes (1987, 1988) the Asian Indian self as a

familial self, in which the emphasis is placed on the family in the culture where the importance of the extended family is constant across. The focus is on others' needs and feelings, with extreme emphasis on being sensitive to others. Familial self-promotes relationships that are emotionally intense, where interdependence is highly encouraged, and the emphasis is placed on "our," "we," and "us," rather than on the "I" and "you". This concept of the self fits well into the collectivist Asian Indian culture that promotes interdependence, hierarchical relationships, and extended families. This discussion brings to light some of the cultural issues caused by shifting and navigating the gender ideologies in more recent times and what it has meant throughout acculturation for the Asian Indian couple living in the United States.

Regardless of cultural differences and religious influences, there are common characteristics of Asian Indian immigrant marriages such as arranged marriages, patriarchal hierarchies, sharp division of gender roles, orthodox sexual standards, and a strong emphasis on pride and shame (Abudabbeh, 1998; Nassar-McMillan, Ajrouch & Hakim-Larson, 2014). Most of the characteristics mentioned above stem from the collectivistic Asian Indian culture often in conflict with Western values of egalitarianism in relationships and may contribute to marital conflict for some Asian Indian immigrants (Abbott, Springer & Hollist, 2008; Nassar-McMillan & Hakim-Larson, 2003).

Socially, globalization has played a key role in creating greater awareness and has contributed significantly toward the gradual shift in gender ideology in India (Jain, 2014). Also, the move away from the joint family system to more nuclear families, especially to an immigrant family exposed to U.S. culture has led to greater autonomy for the married couple allowing for more egalitarian attitudes in the marriage. Moreover,

young Asian Indian women, today have more opportunities for education and employment now than in the past and are not as dependent on men to provide for (Jain, 2014).

However, Balagopal (1987) conducted a study with working Asian Indian immigrant wives and mothers in the United States and questioned whether Indian marriages in the U.S reflect the changing realities of two-career families. Through six case studies, Balagopal concluded that women who work outside the home carry a double burden and experience of what Hochschild (1989) calls the “second shift” (p. 23). In some cases, men had begun to pitch in with household chores, but for the most part, it fell on the women to manage both, career and family. Balagopal also found that the woman’s earning capacity was directly proportional to the kind of adjustments she could expect at home. While this was not found to be a conscious choice by the men, it does point to the level of financial contribution affecting gender equality. Sonawat (2001) contends that the working-woman gets saddled with a multiplicity of roles and finds herself constantly exhausted both mentally and physically, which is exacerbated further by the indifferent attitudes of their husbands and their in-laws. The writer experienced this, particularly when her husband became ill, and her family expected her to quit her job to be a full-time care provider.

The family system consists of well-defined roles, rules, and sentiments that bind family members together. Though the nuclear family residing in the United States may be physically separate, often the extended family is significantly involved in the functioning and in making important family decisions (Dasgupta, 1998). The extended family, specifically the husbands’ parents, assert their control with frequent and extensive visits to their sons’ family. Although host country’s culture may influence the immigrant

families, on topics of dating and marriage, they follow the cultural norms of their native culture (Dasgupta, 1996).

Asian Indian parents overindulge their infants and toddlers by pampering them. Male children are considered extremely important in the family as they carry the family name. Female children are desired only if a male child already exists in the family. As the child grows, shame, guilt, and a sense of moral obligation are used as the primary mechanisms of control for children entering adolescence and young adulthood (Sue, 1981). There has traditionally been a difference in gender role socialization of boys and girls. Young girls continue to be presented with mythological role models of obedient, submissive and long-suffering women such as Sita of the Ramayana (Gupta, 1999). The “ideal” woman is expected to sacrifice her individuality to fulfill her submissive role in the marriage. At the cost of individual freedom, this method of control assures the cohesiveness of the family and secures group identity for Asian Indians (Triandis et al., 1988).

Parent and child relationships are given precedence over those of spouses in Asian Indian culture (Asai & Lucca, 1988). High levels of interdependence are nurtured in an Asian Indian family. The women are expected to be dependent on their father, the husband, and the eldest son throughout their life. Children are dependent emotionally and often socially on their parents. The respect for elders is supreme. The family unit controls all areas of their member's lives. Subsequently, challenges such as familial, emotional, professional, financial, or health are handled within the family (Segal, 1991).

Immigration holds a potential threat to the Asian Indian immigrant couples where hierarchical power relationships exist. The power relationship between the immigrant

spouses is measured in two ways: by the decision-making patterns and the division of household tasks (Haddad & Lam, 1994; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992; Richmond, 1976; Vazques-Nuttall, Romero-Garcia & de Leon, 1988; Ybarra, 1982). The Indian marriage with its roots in the patriarchal tenets has always had more traditional gender roles. Balagopal's study (1987) revealed that while Asian Indian men in the United States have begun to participate more in household labor, the major burden of it still falls on the woman, even if she is working. Stanik (2012) suggests that this trend is true for American marriages as well, since women have continued to enter the labor force but men's participation in household labor has stalled.

Furthermore, according to Gupta (1999), divorce strikes at the very heart of the Indian patriarchal system. It has become a larger issue for the Asian Indians living in the U.S that when contemplating divorce, a woman is not only challenging the prescribed gender roles but also posing a threat to the image so dear to this immigrant community. A code of silence is enforced on its members to preserve the image of the trouble-free, family-oriented group (Becker, 1991). Divorce is regarded as a sacrilegious act and is socially discouraged (Mullatti, 1995).

The Attitude of Asian Indian Immigrants to Acculturation

The Asian Indian community seems to be assimilating well into mainstream American culture despite many cultural differences between their native and host culture (Khandelwal, 2002). The evidence from ethnographic studies suggests that Asian Indian immigrants tend to function bi-culturally due to their experience with colonization (Kurian & Ghosh, 1983). The Asian Indian immigrants appear to be the model minority (Khandelwal, 2002) as they have been a successful immigrant group and have

acculturated successfully to the environment in their host country. A study with Indian immigrants by Wakil et al. (1981) concludes that Asian Indian immigrants have “accepted changes in more ‘pragmatic values’ but have resisted alterations in their ‘core values’” such as dating, marriage and gender role expectations (Chand, 2012, p.2).

Studies conducted in the U.S. indicate that though Asian immigrants have adapted to their new environment, they seem to have retained their values concerning marriage, home, family, children, religion, and taste for ethnic food (Moghaddam & Taylor, 1987; Kurian, 1989; Segal, 1991; Kar et al., 1995, 1996). Asian Indian immigrants keep close ties with their cultural heritage by attempting to reinvent Indian culture on foreign soil. Networking of religious institutions, cultural associations, and social gatherings often allows Indians to hold on to their traditional values which are in sharp contrast to the more autonomous individualism that prevails in U.S culture (Malhotra & Sachdev, 2005)

According to Gupta (1999), Indian immigrants face a “double bind” (p. 8) between the mainstream emphasis on individuality and the tremendous pressure from their communities to conform to traditional ideas. Gupta (1999) also asserts that ethnic communities here are often more vigilant than Asian Indians in India in maintaining their cultural heritage. While Western culture influences their peers in India, Indians who immigrated to the U.S in the 1960’s and 70’s often exist in a “time capsule” (Jain, 2014, p. 7). They try to preserve social values that were prevalent in India when they were growing up, forgetting that India has undergone vast changes due to globalization (Gupta, 1999).

This experience of reconciling two value systems can be like walking a tightrope over a river full of alligators spanning two cultures while trying to create an identity for

oneself that incorporates both the values of the Indian heritage as well as those of mainstream America. It is particularly challenging for the Indian immigrant woman. There is great emphasis on preserving the honor associated with the family name and Dasgupta and Dasgupta (1996, p. 72) propose that the responsibility for maintaining this honor falls disproportionately on Indian women. They are viewed as the bearers and transmitters of Indian tradition and culture. As a result, Asian Indian immigrant women living in the United States may find themselves navigating conflicting ideals of family harmony, dependency, strict gender role expectations and collectivistic values on the one hand and individualism and egalitarianism on the other (Varghese & Jenkins, 2009). Immigrants often require non-traditional behaviors to succeed in their new culture, but these behaviors may not coincide with the immigrant's traditional beliefs which occasionally results in contradictory values and behaviors that may lead to severe stress and a sense of alienation (Noda, Noda & Clark, 1990). It is a distressing time for many Asian Indian immigrant couples, as leaving home and immigrating to the United States increases marital conflict. Almeida (2005) explains that couples have issues negotiating and adapting to host culture's values. Also, some Asian Indian men are found to frequently resort to violence in order stay powerful in the relationship while the women live in fear of shaming their family and choose to live in silence (Ramu, 1988).

Acculturative Stress

Acculturative stress is triggered by differences in practices, values, and language between and within the host and native cultures (Gil, Vega, & Dimas, 2006; Padilla, Cervantes, Maldonado, & Garcia, 1988). Stress is a response to a perceived imbalance between environmental demands and personal coping resources, whereby environmental

demands exceed coping resources, resulting in adverse effects (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Immigrant families and their later generations endure the process of acculturation and are involved in many different ways with their host and native cultures. Therefore, they may have difficulties negotiating these intercultural interactions, which gives rise to various levels of acculturative stress based on available coping resources (Flores et al., 2015). Acculturative stress is not a detrimental force on every single Asian Indian immigrant couple. It may not occur with as much force for those individuals who can efficiently cope with acculturation challenges and make certain adjustments to cultural discrepancies posed by the host culture. However, people who find the demands for cultural adaptation beyond their ability to adjust could experience acculturative stress (Goforth et al., 2014).

The ABC-X Family Stress Model. Reuben Hill's (1958) model of family stress provides a clear explanation for how immigrant families can either cope effectively with acculturative stress or fall into crisis, such as resulting in marital distress or divorce. The model has three factors: A (the event) interacts with B (resources), interacts with C (perception) to produce X (the crisis) (Boss, 2002; Hill, 1958).

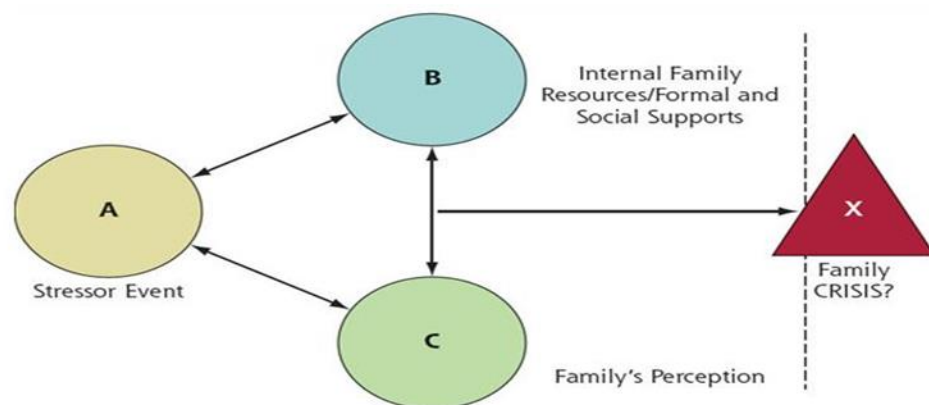


Figure 1. The ABC-X Family Stress Model.

In the family stress theory, the Family Stressor can be immigration and acculturation which results in a family crisis such as marital distress. The ABC-X Family Stress model is used to identify the type of stressors, explore the family resources, and evaluate the individual or family's meaning or perception of the stressors, helping them to navigate and be more proactive in adapting successfully to stress. The theory suggests that utilizing resources such as social support and spiritual resources can buffer its impact within the marital relationship (Hill, 1958). Whenever the couple appraises the situation, considers their available resources, and perceives, defines or understands the stressor event positively and are optimistic, they are more likely to cope and adapt successfully to the situation (Madden-Derdich & Herzog, 2005; McKenry & Price, 2005). Furthermore, Karney and Bradbury (1995) found that stress is associated with increased marital instability and decreased marital quality. They explained their conclusions about changes in marital stability using the family stress theory. The researchers suggest that the couple's adaptive process mediated the stress on marital quality and stability. The marital relationship's quality is associated with both positive or negative mental health outcomes (Barnett, Steptoe & Gaeris, 2005). High-conflict relationships are linked with depressive symptoms, perceived stress and low of marital satisfaction (Acitelli & Badr, 2005; Dehle, Larson & Landers, 2001).

The process of immigration is a significantly stressful event contributing to significant life changes and transitions within the individual's and the family's lifestyle (Lavee & Krivosh, 2012). Immigration requires people to make some fundamental changes and may cause serious psychological issues, as it can be a very different and unique experience for those who go through it (Walsh & Shulman, 2007). It can also

affect an individual's physical, personal, and psychological aspects that may include feeling a sense of isolation and intense loneliness; grieving the loss of old values and accommodating to and accepting new ones; and making adjustments to climate changes and lifestyle (Lavee & Krivosh, 2012, p. 132).

However, the quality and the degree and of acculturation may vary across contexts. It may create a disorganized sense of self due to shifts between role-expectations, as contextual expectations are continually reorganizing one's self-concept. Immigration is found to threaten family cohesion, family functioning and the quality of family relations (Berry et al., 1987; Cohen & Haberfeld, 2003; Horowitz, 1999; Lavee & Krivosh, 2012; Roer-Strier, 2001). Family stress research states that major life events, normative developments and transitions, and everyday stressors impact couples and families.

In the midst of the acculturation process, some individuals may encounter a range of stressors related to how they have been viewed and perceived by both individuals and institutions within the host culture (Goforth et al., 2014). Furthermore, Transactional stress theory (Pillow, Zautra, and Sandler, 1996) suggests that any prolonged and ongoing stressful life events such as acculturative stress—tends to aggravate the stress experienced in other areas of life (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Although stress does not affect all people equally, it can lead to illness and negative experiences. Coping with stress is, therefore, essential. It affects how people search for medical care and social support and how they believe the advice of the professionals (Lazarus & Cohen, 1977).

The three major dimensions of acculturative stress that have particular relevance to the Asian Indian immigrants are: familial, attitudinal, and environmental (Fuertes &

Westbrook, 1996; Goforth et al., 2014). Environmental factors are direct or indirect experiences of racism; attitudinal factors include difficulties caused by emotional cut-off from the intimate relationship with families, friends, and native culture; and familial factors are those resulting from paradoxical encounters with familial values or cultural norms.

In general, life stressors (Dona & Berry, 1994), and the experience of racism and perceived discrimination (Cook et al., 2009) have been found to be correlated with higher levels of acculturative stress. Even though there have been studies examining acculturation among Asian and Hispanic families (e.g., Dinh, Sarason & Sarason, 1994; Hwang & Wood, 2009; Lau et al., 2005), there is insufficient empirical research examining the acculturative experiences of immigrant and ethnic minority Asian Indian immigrant families. One of the few studies that examined acculturative stress in the Asian Indian immigrant population revealed that there is a strong association between socio-cultural adversities such as discrimination and psychological distress (Ahmed, Kia-Keating, & Tsai, 2011).

John Berry (1994) has developed a model for understanding the strategies that people use in acculturation. It includes four types of acculturation strategies namely, integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. Berry concludes that those immigrants who can integrate or develop a bicultural identity experience decreased acculturative stress, and anxiety, and have a chance of developing significantly fewer psychological problems than those who were marginalized or separated from the host culture. LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1993) added to Berry's acculturative framework by introducing the concept of bi-cultural efficacy. They suggested that

individuals can gain bicultural competency if they were able to maintain positive attitudes towards both groups, have knowledge of cultural values and beliefs and be able to communicate effectively in both cultures. LaFromboise et al. (1993) argued that immigrants who were able to develop these skills perform better in familial, vocational, and academic endeavors, thereby encountering significant success in cultural adaptation.

The family systems theory points out that the changes incurred by one spouse affect the other (Lavee & Krivosh, 2012). Acculturation constitutes a double transition, as both the individuals and the marriage itself need to adjust to the new culture (Ataca & Berry, 2002), and to each other's acculturation changes. The threat to marital relationships occurs when there is an inequality between what is demanded of the couple internally and externally, and the resources available to them (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983; Miller, 1978). The migration process then forces the Asian Indian immigrant couple to define their cultural identity. The difficulty in transitioning becomes increasingly challenging when the ethnic difference between the couple's native country and the host country becomes apparent. These differences may then intensify interpersonal conflicts in the couple and put pressure on their marital stability (Lavee & Krivosh, 2012).

Research suggests that marital distress is one of the main reasons for individuals seeking therapy, thereby identifying marital relationships as one of the leading sources of dissatisfaction among people (Padilla & Borrero, 2006; Snyder, Castellani & Wisman, 2006; Snyder, Heyman & Haynes, 2005). Markham (1981), in his five-year research on the predictors of marital distress, concluded that couples who were distressed were less satisfied by their interaction patterns than non-distressed couples.

Marital Health Among Asian Indians

A spouse's personal experience of satisfaction or happiness with a marital relationship has been referred to as marital satisfaction (Wolf, 1996). It also refers to an individual's subjective evaluation of the quality of a relationship (Crawford, 2002). Changing expectations have been found to contribute to marital satisfaction among Asian Indian immigrant couples (Ahmad & Reid, 2008). In fact, Siddique (1983) found that Asian Indian couples who immigrated to the US had to depend more on each other, and had to rely on their spouses more than on their extended families. Hence, there was an increased expectation of companionship among these couples compared to those in India. The research suggests that these couples evaluate their marital satisfaction based on expression of affection, mutual compatibility, friendship and leisure time, interpersonal trust, and self-disclosure (Ahmad & Reid, 2008; Desai, 1991; Siddiqui, 1983; Singh & Kanjirathinkal, 1999). Moreover, Sastry (1999), after researching married Asian Indian couples, found that education, income, age, and full-time work were the factors affecting Asian Indian men's satisfaction, whereas women found more satisfaction in fulfilling their traditional roles as homemakers. This fits with the finding that Asian Indian women from a young age are socialized to be subservient to their male counterparts who are socialized to be powerful (Dasgupta, 1998; Khandelwal, 2001).

Marital satisfaction in Asian Indian arranged-married couples is reported being significantly higher when compared to American couples in a comparative study conducted by Yelsma and Athappily (1988). Myers, Madathil, and Tingle (2005) found that arranged marriage participants from India were as satisfied with their marriages as participants from the United States who chose their spouse. Continuing with this line of

research, Madathil and Benshoff (2008) explored the impact of environment and cultural context on individuals living in India and the United States. Findings from this study showed that Indian couples with an arranged marriage residing in the United States were more satisfied with their marriage, significantly attributing their satisfaction to the geographical distance from both spouses' families of origin. Arranged marriages are also reported to be linked to patriarchy. In comparison to those individuals in wife-dominated families, those in husband-dominated families reported higher marital satisfaction and lower marital distress (Shukla & Kapoor, 1990). Many young Asian Indian immigrants internalize American values and seek to choose their marriage partner based solely on their independent choice and satisfaction rather than fulfilling societal expectations (Khandelwal, 2002). This may end up affecting their relationship with their parents and the expectations put on them, in turn causing severe conflict within families (Farver et al., 2002b). This conflict might also put a strain on the couple after they are married.

Differentiation of Self

Bowen's (1978) family therapy centers around two variables, "fusion/differentiation." The two concepts of togetherness and individuality must remain in balance for healthy functioning. Imbalance towards togetherness leads to "fusion," "stuck-togetherness," and "undifferentiation." Differentiation, the capacity to function autonomously, helps people avoid getting caught up in reactive polarities, which result in polarized functioning. "The central idea is that unresolved emotional attachment to one's family must be resolved rather than passively accepted or reactively rejected before one can differentiate a mature, healthy personality" (Nichols & Schwartz, 1998, p.144).

Differentiation of self is well-defined as the ability to reason in the midst of an emotional situation while maintaining close emotional relationships (Bowen 1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). According to Bowen (1978), differentiation of self is the capability of individuals to balance autonomy in relationships between their emotional and intellectual functioning. Differentiation of self also refers to “the ability to experience intimacy with and independence from others” (Skowron & Friedlander, 1998, p. 235).

Greater differentiation allows an individual to experience strong feelings, yet shift to calm, logical thinking depending on the context (Skowron & Friedlander, 1998). Differentiated individuals are better able to cope with stress due to their flexibility and adaptability (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Those who are poorly differentiated are more “emotionally reactive” (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 320) as they find it challenging to remain calm while others are emotional. If the individual finds it burdensome to deal with the overwhelming emotional reactions of the interactive patterns of their family, they may tend to engage in fusion or emotional cut-off (Bowen, 1978). The lack of flexibility and adaptability creates further enmeshment or disengaged boundaries in the family allowing fusion or cut-off to dominate the family system (Skowron & Friedlander, 1998).

Being able to differentiate successfully is related to physical and psychological functioning, and psychological distress (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Bowen (1978) stated that less differentiated individuals become more dysfunctional under stress, and suffer psychological symptoms such as anxiety, depression, alcoholism, psychoticism, and somatization. On the other hand, highly differentiated individuals adjust better psychologically and have fewer health-related issues.

Differentiation of Self and Marital Satisfaction

An individual's differentiation is determined early in life, and changes can take place through unusual life experiences (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). These changes can also occur as a result of the process of immigration (Roytburd & Friedlander, 2008). Highly differentiated individuals are reported to have more marital satisfaction, to be effective problem solvers, and to be satisfied with the contact they have with their families (Bowen, 1978). Marital distress is associated with behavioral reactivity (Jacobson, Follette, & McDonald, 1982; Jacobson, Waldron, & Moore, 1980). Behavioral reactivity is defined by Jacobson and his colleagues as the spouse's reaction at the affective level to some stimulus from the partner. Couples who showed greater marital satisfaction were less reactive in their interactions with their partners, while distressed couples showed heightened emotional reactivity to both positive and negative experiences in their relationship. In another study, Harvey, Curry, and Bray (1991) reported that greater fusion and less intimacy with an individual's parents predicted higher emotional reactivity and deficits in intimacy with the individual's spouse. In a study conducted on thirty-two married and acculturated Asian Americans, Murphy (1999), as cited in Skowron's (2000) research, found no relationship between differentiation of self and marital satisfaction.

The undifferentiation in marriage manifests itself in three major areas with symptoms: marital conflict, or marital dysfunction in one spouse, and projection of the problems. Marital conflict arises when neither partner is willing to give in to the other and neither one can perform an adaptive role (Kerr & Bowen, 1972). This occurs when both strive to take the dominant role (Bowen, 1988). Both partners invest much thinking

or action energy, either positive or negative, focused on the other. The second symptom includes dysfunction (Brown, 1978). The spouse that remains in the adaptive position gradually loses the ability to function and make decisions for themselves. All that is required is any moderate increase in stress to trigger the adaptive spouse into dysfunction, which can manifest in physical, emotional, or social such as acting out or alcohol abuse. These are hard to reverse without addressing the underlying marital dysfunction. The third symptom that appears in families with parents who are undifferentiated is the projection process, which can be immensely detrimental to the children in these families. It is the process by which parents project the undifferentiation to one or more children. Bowen (1976) saw this process to be so significant when family functioning is low.

Differentiation of Self Among Asian Indians

Although there are no studies to the writer's knowledge that specifically link differentiation of self and Asian Indians, Bowen's (1978) concepts can be applied to the Asian Indian culture. One of the main differences between the Asian Indian and the American cultural belief system is the understanding of the concept of the self. Asian Indians tend to be more collectivistic, where they view themselves and their families as one instead of separate (Farver et al., 2002a). Individuals are expected to yield their expectation for the benefit of the group (Das & Kemp, 1997; Ibrahim et al., 1997). The primary focus is on the family, with family and gender roles defined, with males acting as the financial earners and decision makers, thereby encouraging emotional dependency. Women are expected to be more dependent on men whereas children remain in the parent's home with the parents, even after marriage and financial independence (Patel et al., 1996).

A hierarchical relationship exists between family members, in which the older member is regarded as more potent and is respected much more than a younger member (Kakar, 1971). These values and expectations may contribute to increased enmeshment and influence differentiation. Madathil and Benshoff (2008) also attributed marital satisfaction to natural cutoff between the couples and their family of origin. The difference in the underlying philosophy between Asian Indian and Western cultures can cause significant conflicts between partners and their families.

Asian Indian immigrants who migrate at a relatively young age have a greater chance of adapting to relationships and professional possibilities in a new culture (Hernandez, 1997). Despite this, these individuals must learn to redefine their identity within their families, gain expertise, and develop a good support system while differentiating themselves from their family of origin. At this point, they become vulnerable to cut-off not just from their families but also their cultural heritage, which might increase emotional isolation within these individuals, highlighting the need for peer and familial relationships (Gelfand & Kutzik, 1979).

Bowen (1978) introduced the key principle of his theory when he wrote that families exist within nuclear family emotional systems. He stated that anxiety had a tendency to be transmitted throughout a nuclear family emotional system, especially if those within the system had low levels of differentiation of self. Although Bowen's theory and Asian Indian culture seem compatible, there are some traits of the Asian Indian culture that raise some questions of applicability. Bowen's theory suggests that the Asian Indian culture is "less differentiated." Those people with lower levels of differentiation are described as being more relationship-directed and less independent and

goal oriented. Bowen (1978) believed that the more frequently the couple could alternate between dominant and adaptive roles, the healthier the relationship. However, in Asian Indian culture roles are prescribed such that females are taught to be adaptive whereas the male is expected to be dominant. It seems apparent that this cultural norm would give males an advantage when assessed against Bowen's concept of differentiation of self.

Conclusion

With the literature reviewed above and previously cited research in mind, the writer intends to examine the relationships among acculturative stress, immigration, marital distress, and differentiation of self and address this gap of the impact of acculturative stress on marital health distress on Asian Indian immigrant couples. Results are aimed to make a significant contribution to the family-science field since the numbers of Asian Indian immigrants are drastically increasing in the U.S.

We will now transition to an actual case study that applies the theoretical and biblical ideas above to a first-generation Asian Indian couple. As we transition to Chapter 4, the writer would like to remind the reader of the main purpose of this thesis is to help the Asian Indian couples with acculturative stress and also increase their levels of differentiation of self within their marriage through the use of Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy.

CHAPTER 4 - CASE STUDY

The case study in this chapter examines a Christian Asian Indian immigrant family, consisting of a married couple and their two adolescent children.¹ Vinod is a forty-seven years old Asian Indian male and his wife, Rani, is a forty-five years old Asian Indian female. Vinod and Rani's marriage was arranged by their parents. They have been married for twenty years and have two children. Their daughter, Anita, is eighteen years old and their son, Raja, is sixteen-years-old. Each member of the family agreed to participate in this case study to fulfill the requirements for the writer's Doctor of Ministry program.

This case study examines the impact of acculturative stress on the couple's marital relationship. The couple in this case study was experiencing a level of dissatisfaction at home, manifested in tension in their marriage. Their relationship style can be best described as confrontational (McGoldrick, Gerson, & Sueli, 2008). The cause of the dissatisfaction was determined to be related to the acculturative stress, family of origin attachments, and differentiation of self. The couple's different expectations based on their family of origin beliefs, values, and practices impacted the family in this case study, but the greatest impact of acculturation was on the marriage relationship. It caused an emotional disconnect between husband and wife, adversely affecting their function and cohesiveness. Therefore, the focus was on the couple's therapy to assess and reestablish the emotional bond between husband and wife and find appropriate coping strategies for their cultural transition and adaptability. The writer also met with the children to gather information and discuss family dynamics.

¹ All names have been changed to ensure confidentiality.

The Social, Attitudinal, Familial, and Environmental

Acculturative Stress Scale (SAFE Scale)

The SAFE Scale is an assessment instrument used to measure the acculturative stress of a couple. The SAFE was initially developed by Padilla et al. (1985) (60 items) and shortened by Mena et al. (1987) to 26 items. It measures the acculturative stress of the couple in four contexts: social, attitudinal, familial and environmental acculturative stress.

The respondent uses a 5-point Likert scale with options ranging from 1= not stressful, 2 = somewhat stressful, 3 = stressful, 4 = very stressful, 5 = extremely stressful. The Environmental factor consists of ten items such as “I feel uncomfortable when others make jokes about or put down people of my ethnic background” or “Many people have stereotypes about my culture or ethnic group and treat me as if they are true.” The Social factor is measured by four items such as “I do not feel at home” or “I do not have any close friends”; finally, four items, including “It is hard to express to my friend how I feel,” or “Loosening ties with my country is difficult” measure the Attitudinal factor.

The Differentiation of Self Inventory-Revised (DSI-Revised)

DSI-Revised (Skowron, 2003) is administered to evaluate the two subscales, intrapersonal (IP) and emotional reactivity (ER), which assess the intrapersonal dimension of differentiation. The other two subscales, fusion with others (R-FO) and emotional cutoff (EC), assess the couple’s interpersonal dimension. The intrapersonal dimension refers to the couple’s capacity to regulate affect or emotions (Skowron & Dendy, 2004; Skowron, Holmes, & Sabatelli, 2003), whereas the interpersonal dimension consists of their ability to negotiate the relational independence and togetherness (Kerr &

Bowen, 1988). Vinod and Rani were asked to rate how true the items were about them on a scale of 1 (not at all true of me) to 6 (very true).

Genogram

A genogram is a family diagram that provides a way of mapping family patterns and relationships across at least three generations. It was constructed for Vinod and Rani as part of this project (see Appendix A for Vinod and Rani's genogram).

The Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS)

RDAS is a self-report questionnaire that the writer administered to assess seven dimensions of Vinod and Rani's relationship within three overarching categories, including consensus in decision making, values, and affection, satisfaction in the relationship concerning stability and conflict regulation, and cohesion as seen through activities and discussion. 1) Dyadic Consensus measures the extent of agreement between spouses on matters of money, religion, recreation, friends, household tasks, and time spent together. 2) Dyadic Satisfaction assesses the level of tension in the relationship, as well as the extent to which an individual has considered ending the relationship. High scores on this subscale indicate satisfaction with the present state of the relationship and commitment to its continuance. 3) Affectional Expression measures the individual's satisfaction with the expression of affection and sex in the relationship. 4) Dyadic Cohesion assesses the common interests and activities shared by the couple.

In the RDAS questionnaire, couples are instructed to rate 14 aspects of relationship on a 5 or 6 point scale. Scores on the RDAS range from 0 to 69 with higher scores indicating greater relationship satisfaction and lower scores indicating greater

relationship distress. The cut-off score for the RDAS is 48, Any score above indicates non-distress and scores of 47 and below indicate distress.

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is a personality inventory or test, employed in vocational, educational, and psychotherapy settings to evaluate personality types and gives insight into an individual's behavior. The Myers-Briggs evaluates personality type and preference based on the four Jungian psychological types:

- Extraversion (E) or Introversion (I)
- Sensing (S) or Intuition (N)
- Thinking (T) or Feeling (F)
- Judging (J) or Perceiving (P)

All assessments were administered for Vinod, except the Myers Briggs Type Indicator, on March 20, 2015, and reported on March 27, 2015. For Rani, they were administered on March 22, 2015, and reported on March 27, 2015.

Introduction and Family Background of Vinod

Vinod's father is 72 years old, and lives in Chennai, India. He has a well-disciplined and active life with no known mental health diagnosis but has an estranged relationship with his father. Vinod's mother is 68 years old; she has no known history of physical or mental health diagnosis. Vinod's parents have been married for 48 years. Vinod is the oldest child, followed by a sister. The sister has been married for 22 years; and they have two adult children. She has no known history of physical or mental health diagnosis.

Vinod's family of origin displays relationship styles that include discord, conflict, harmony, love, admiration, and friendship (McGoldrick, Gerson, & Sueli, 2008; Scazzero & Bird, 2003). Vinod's parents appear to practice a harmonious relationship style with the family system's homeostasis dependent upon his father being in control. According to Vinod, his mother is very submissive to a husband who is all-ruling. Clinton and Sibcy (2006; 2014) would classify persons like Vinod's father with an avoidant attachment style within the marital dyad. The presentation of the avoidant attachment style might be due to an overinflated view of self and a low view of others' trustworthiness. Vinod's mother would be classified as a person with a secure attachment because she shows a full range of affect, is comfortable with closeness and is willing to commit (Clinton & Sibcy, 2006, 2014; Johnson, 2004).

Father-son dyads similar to that of Vinod and his father function with a relationship style characterized by discord and conflict (McGoldrick, Gerson, & Sueli, 2008; Scazzero & Bird, 2003). Growing up, there was tension between Vinod and his father. They feel hurt when their expectations for the relationship are not met. He and his father would attempt to bond through sports, like cricket, but even this possible bonding activity seemed difficult because of the driven nature of Vinod's father. Furthermore, Vinod's father showed little physical and verbal affection to his son. Vinod felt he could never measure up to his father's standards. Positively, Vinod felt provided for by his father and embraces the fact that he was taught persistence and drive through the father-son dyad. In general, Vinod desired and still desires acceptance from his father. He has allowed the relationship with his dad to wound him and even to this day it still wounds

him. Vinod's father lets lots of things from his past wound him as he was not able to get past it.

Vinod has a stable relationship with his mother. Vinod feels they understand each other. He and his mom are very much alike. Vinod finds it easier to talk to his mother than he does to his father. He says his mom is easy to take for granted and he has taken her for granted at times, but he appreciates her a lot. He is proud that she has worked very hard and has bettered herself through education.

The mother-son relationship of Vinod and his mother could be identified as a relationship style with love and affection (McGoldrick, Gerson, & Sueli, 2008; Scazzero & Bird, 2003). Vinod described his mother as well-read, humble, loving, caring, nurturing, and encouraging. Vinod stated that his mother played a significant role in his faith development. The mother-son dyad appeared to be one of acceptance and peace, and provided relief from the conflict between Vinod and his father.

Vinod's relationship with his sister is also harmonious (McGoldrick, Gerson, & Sueli, 2008; Scazzero and Bird, 2003), best described as a dyad which is loving, with one sibling admiring the other sibling (McGoldrick, Gerson, & Sueli, 2008; Scazzero and Bird, 2003). For Vinod, it appears that he admires his sister and desires her approval, although not as strong as that of his father. He also indicated that he loves to support his sister and that his sister looks up to him. He stated that his sister was the right mix of both parents and that he is always protective of her.

Observations

Appearance and Behavior: Vinod was always on time and in a positive mood for each session. His clothing was clean and weather-appropriate. Vinod presented himself with

an affirming smile, a comfortable posture, and continuous eye contact at the beginning of a session. Vinod's demeanor changed when discussing his father. Vinod then looked down, and his shoulders started to slump. Vinod displayed the emotions of excitement and confusion when addressing his marriage. Vinod's face lit up when describing the birth of his children. Vinod strongly feels called to live in the high-tech world. Vinod desires for his vocational calling to provide a safe and stable home for his family. He embraced the assessment process as evidenced by the follow-up questions he asked the writer during the interview sessions.

Influential Events: Vinod identified key influential events from his past. The important event identified by Vinod was the birth of his two children, Anita and Raja. He stated that he was overly invested in making sure that their needs were met. The final event identified by Vinod as important was his entry to the United States. He stated that it set his life on a "whole new trajectory." Vinod believes that it was a blessing from God.

Developmental History: Vinod presented no known developmental delays as a child.

Social History: Vinod had normal social functioning as a child and adolescent.

However, his interactions with peers were limited due to his father. Vinod also had a fear of public speaking as an adolescent.

Educational History: Vinod was a mediocre student throughout both elementary and secondary school. Vinod completed his Master of Arts in Business Administration, and currently works for a private firm. Vinod's primary strengths are caring, nurturing and hard work (Rath, 2007). Vinod is aware of his strengths through affirmation from family, friends, and peers.

Medical History: Vinod had no known medical issues as a child, adolescent or adult.

Psychiatric History: Vinod was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) his sophomore year in high school. He also felt compelled to view pornography daily between the ages of twelve and twenty. Vinod stated that he would view pornography at least once per day. Vinod's pornography use affected his initial ability to attach to Rani. Vinod's confession of pornography use to Rani was a stressful moment for their marriage.

Mental Status of Vinod

Cognitive Functioning: Vinod's thinking processes were organized, methodical, and focused on thematic concepts. His reasoning was a mixture of concrete and abstract processes, driven by the values of inclusion and harmony (Berk, 2010). Vinod's perception of situations was reality-based and normal for his age. His judgment sometimes was compromised by his fear of disrupting the harmony or equilibrium of a situation. He had no short-term or long-term difficulties with memory and was an enthusiastic learner.

Vinod displayed a stable state of being with a positive emotional tone. He did, however, speak with anxiety when discussing self-worth, and his relationship with his father. The anxiety did not initially appear overwhelming or persistent as he never lost the ability to function physically, socially, emotionally, or mentally. His orientation was always current and appropriate to the situation. There was never any suicidal or homicidal ideation either past or present.

Introduction and Family Background of Rani

Rani is a bright, and attractive Asian Indian woman. She dressed appropriately for the season with casual clothes, a tee-shirt and jeans with no makeup or accessories. Rani

reported that she grew up in an emotionally repressed family. Her family of origin consists of relationship styles that include cutoff, estrangement, distance, and hostility (McGoldrick, Gerson, & Sueli, 2008; Scazzero & Bird, 2003).

Rani's father is 70 years old. Rani's father had a very tough time in his career. It was during those stressful times that he had entered into a state of depression. Rani's father has always been passive. Rani's mother is a 68-year-old stay-at-home mom. Her mother has no known history of physical or mental health diagnosis. Rani is the youngest of two children. Her brother is a 48-year-old executive. Rani's brother is married and has one daughter and a son. Her brother has no known history of physical or mental illness.

Rani indicated that her parents did not show much affection to each other and described their relationship as functional. Her father spent many nights on the living room couch. He also hid major financial issues from her mother, which resulted in increased estrangement and cutoff. While Rani's described her father as passive, she reported that her mother was self-focused, critical and demanding. As a child and adolescent, the mother-daughter dyad for Rani was distant and hostile (McGoldrick, Gerson, & Sueli, 2008; Scazzero & Bird, 2003). Rani indicated that she felt misunderstood and undervalued, and she described her relationship with her mother as confrontational. She stated that they would often yell at one another. The constant disagreements with her mother and the negative response from her mother made her gravitate closer to her dad and an aunt. Currently, Rani's relationship with her mother is not as hostile but continues to be emotionally distant.

As a child and adolescent, the father-daughter dyad for Rani would be described as a close friendship (McGoldrick, Gerson, & Sueli, 2008; Scazzero & Bird, 2003). Rani

described her dad as loving, compassionate, hard-working, and selfless. He was a safe person who showed her affection through verbal affirmation. As a child and adolescent, Rani's relationship with her brother was harmonious (McGoldrick, Gerson, & Sueli, 2008; Scazzero & Bird, 2003). She looked up to her brother and bonded with him. Their relationship continues to be harmonious to this day.

Observations

Rani arrived on time for our sessions with a comfortable and friendly posture. She maintained eye contact the majority of the time but tended to look down and grow tense when discussing her mother or her relationship with Vinod. The client teared up when discussing the connection with her mother. When discussing her marriage, the client appeared concerned. While struggling to attach to her mother, Rani feels a strong attachment to her father, and it is that attachment which compels her to stay close to her family.

Personal History: Rani grew up in a contentious home. She often conflicted with her mother and relied heavily on her father. Outside of the home, the client found solace and safety in her aunt, who passed away. Currently, the client depends solely on her father and brother for relational connection.

Rani mentioned moving to college as a significant moment in her life. She stated that moving to college allowed her to be more independent because, at home, she did not always get along with her mother. She was able to make decisions for herself and make an effort to obtain the relational connections she desired. However, her pursuit of such connection led Rani to make interpersonal decisions that she would later regret. As a result, another significant milestone in her life was moving back from college and

enrolling at a university much closer to home. It was at the university that she established a connection with two friends, and obtained a bachelor's degree in Information Technology.

Another significant milestone in Rani's life was having a significantly close relationship with her boyfriend of four years that ended in a breakup. As a result, this relationship leads to relational insecurity. Rani later ended up marrying Vinod and coming to the United States.

Developmental and Social History: Rani reported meeting all developmental milestones on time. She denies any developmental delays. She participated in school activities and sports. Rani did struggle to engage in any meaningful friendships outside Kanchana, her college roommate. Rani experienced a period of isolation and loneliness after she and Kanchana experienced a conflict that ended their friendship.

Educational History: Rani was a bright and talented musician and student throughout both elementary and secondary school. She completed a bachelor of arts degree in Information Technology with honors and had a very short career before her marriage to Vinod. After about fifteen years, she completed her Master's in Business Administration in the US and currently works for a private company.

Medical and Psychiatric History: Except for depression during a breakup in college years, Rani had no known medical or psychiatric issues as a child or adolescent.

Mental Status of Rani

Appearance and Behavior: Rani was always on time with appropriate hygiene and dress. She dressed casually for the session, in a tee-shirt and jeans, with no makeup or

accessories. She embraced the assessment process and stated that she was eager to benefit from its results. Rani seems driven, and displayed a high amount of focus and resolve.

Cognitive Functioning: During the interview, she was cooperative, although her level of energy was unremarkable. She was responsive to questions and had no apparent difficulty in understanding the questions. Rani's thinking processes were organized, concrete, and focused on detail (Berk, 2010). Her reasoning focused on concrete concepts, but occasionally included abstract ideas. Rani's perception of situations was reality-based and within the normal range for her age. She is driven by the values of responsibility and order. Loyalty is another of Rani's primary values, which can cause her to focus too much on her dad's well-being when making decisions. Her difficulty to embrace a possible move is an example of such loyalty. She displayed no short-term or long-term difficulties with memory and appeared to be a quick learner.

Rani displayed an increased level of anxiety due to the current dynamics of her relationship with Vinod. She also stated that she experienced panic attacks due to stress regarding an upcoming decision revolving around her mother-in-law's visit from India. Rani displayed sadness and anger when discussing her mother, but joy when discussing her father. The displays of both sadness and peace about her family of origin suggest inner turmoil. Her orientation was always current and appropriate to the situation. There was no suicidal ideation or homicidal ideation either past or present.

Assessment Results of Vinod

MYERS BRIGGS TYPE INDICATOR

As an ISFJ, Vinod is strong-willed and highly organized. He is an introvert; He is practical and patient, but also dependable and loyal. He becomes easily stressed in certain threatening situations. In extreme circumstances, he tends to be accusatory and pessimistic, tending to think the worst and shuts down. He is a patient individual who applies common sense and experience in solving problems. He is responsible and traditional, and also enjoys serving the needs of others and providing practical help. Vinod may be overly cautious, and might not consider the logical consequences of his decisions. He lacks assertiveness, and risk basing his decisions on what he thinks will please others.

DSI-R SCALE

In general, the results of the DSI-R suggest that Vinod will tend to work through conflict willingly but, at times, hesitantly or will try to avoid the conflict (Bowen 1978; Kerr & Bowen; 1988). Conflicts and stressful situations are uncomfortable for Vinod. His scores indicate that there is a linear relationship between attachment avoidance style, anxiety, intimacy, and marital satisfaction (Sayyadpour, 2005). Vinod's DSI-R scores were higher than Rani's and indicated higher acculturative stress levels. His results indicate that he has adapted to their new environment, while simultaneously retaining the traditional, cultural Indian traits, beliefs, and values (Dasgupta, 1998; Hurh & Kim, 1990; Kim, 1997; Saran, 1985; Segal, 1991; Sadowsky & Carey, 1987). He did not simply shed old or Indian values for new ones, but rather he selected, shifted and modified to adapt to the new environment.

The absence of supportive family members in Vinod's life, especially his mom, relatives and church family, means that he lacks a sense of connectedness or emotional support in coping with external stress or challenges in his acculturation process and professional advancement (Wierzbicki, 2004; Dasgupta & Mock, 1997).

DYADIC ADJUSTMENT SCALE (DAS) MARITAL SATISFACTION

In the present study, scores on the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) were used as an objective measure of Vinod and Rani's level of marital satisfaction. Interestingly, Rani scored lower than Vinod in dyadic adjustment. The couple's scores show marital dissatisfaction and marital distress.

The results of the assessment indicate that Vinod's emotional needs are not getting met in the relationship, thereby increasing marital dissatisfaction. Coming from a conservative family with a dominant father and traditional gender-role ideologies, Vinod struggles with Rani's aggressive and egalitarian attitudes, as she has seemed to integrate at a faster pace than he has into the host culture. Both report lower marital satisfaction. Parenting, financial decisions, dating (children) and other social behavior are still points of contention. The lower score indicates increased stress due to the strained relationship, and reactive responses play a big role in marital dissatisfaction. Within the traditional gender-role ideology, Vinod may be more likely to feel threatened by Rani's income level, which is more than his (Atkinson, Greenstein & Lang 2005). Vinod reports higher role conflict as the number of roles he has to fulfill increases. Finally, results indicate that Vinod evaluates himself favorably as a "good husband" who is compassionate, considerate, and egalitarian, as he is seen helping in the house and taking care of children.

Vinod and Rani's conflicting attitudes toward dating, marriage and other social behavior of their children cause tension in their relationship. Rani and the children spend family time together watching movies and playing games, which provides her with a stable relationship system which was missing in her childhood. Instead of Vinod meeting her attachment needs, it seems that her children are meeting them. As a result of Rani's enmeshment with her children, they seem unprepared to establish independence and responsibility outside of their parent's household.

Vinod voices traditionalism, while Rani expresses egalitarian views. A significant shift in the attitude of Rani is evident as she seems acculturate at a faster pace than Vinod. She seems to adapt and integrate the individualistic attitudes, whereas Vinod struggles with conflicting expectations, especially on the issues of separation, individuation, and identity, most likely because they bring the family conflict to the surface (Baptiste, 1993; Lee, 1988). The challenges of coping with stress have led to tension in their relationship and conflicts between Vinod and Rani spilling over to their adolescent children, Anita and Raja. There seems to be constant comparison and criticism of their adolescent children to others, especially in the areas of obedience, discipline, and manners.

Interpretation

Vinod needs to continually work on establishing a healthy attachment style with his father. The result will most likely lead to increased differentiation and healthier attachment with all family members, especially his spouse, Rani. Whenever Vinod encounters moments of deep disappointment with Rani, his primary attachment patterns of avoidance from early childhood resurfaces. Vinod becomes increasingly self-

protective and uses unsuccessful coping strategies, such as blame and withdrawal. This propels him and Rani into a developmental dilemma. As time passes, they feel hurt, and reel from the effects of competition, accusations, and passivity, and he is not able to maintain a strong positive attachment or connection with Rani.

Differentiation frightens Vinod because it signals “we are different” and triggers his anxiety—fear of being left out of the family. In his attempts to calm this anxiety and stress, he reverts to an insecure/avoidance attachment pattern with Rani. As long as he can move past his insecure attachment, learn to function with new patterns that support security, and honor his and his wife’s differences, their relationship will heal and grow, and both spouses will experience increased marital satisfaction (Siegel, 2010).

In the midst of the acculturation process, Vinod encountered a range of stressors related to how he and his family have been viewed and perceived by both individuals and institutes within the dominant culture (Goforth et al., 2014). Even though acculturative stress usually manifests through the behavioral responses of Vinod, it also impacts Rani, their children, and family at the psycho-social dimensions. Vinod’s decision not to use social resources like social, church and community contact, may pressure Rani and leave her with narrowly defined roles. As Rani is very talented musician, the ability to use her innate, creative talent as a coping strategy can help her to network with their church family and boost her self-esteem.

The spiritual support of church and community can buffer the impact of stress at the micro-level of Vinod and Rani’s relationship. One reason Vinod cited for not wanting to attend services in the church was the possibility that their records could be accessed

and would come in the way of career growth. However, it appeared that one of the main reasons was fear of social stigma.

Assessment Results of Rani

The results of Rani's MBTI, DSI-R, SAFE, and Genogram, are considered to be interpretable. There were no deviations from standard procedures.

MYERS BRIGGS TYPE INDICATOR

Rani's MBTI indicates that she prefers to work alone, gather information by focusing on specific facts or results, strive to make objective decisions, and live life in a very organized manner. When facing a problem or task, Rani would most likely work to gather as many details possible when trying to identify a solution. If Rani has to make a decision, she will strive to make objective judgments that honor well-established processes and expectations. Rani prefers to work alone by inwardly reflecting on thoughts and ideas. However, Rani could also be extroverted when such extroversion is tied to duty (Kroeger & Thuesen, 1989). Rani feels a strong sense of duty to safeguard such established processes and expectations (Keirsey, 1998; Kroeger & Thuesen, 1989). When orienting their lives, persons similar to Rani tend to focus on order. If their lives or the lives of their family members are not oriented in an orderly way, Rani will most likely work to create order and expect those around her to follow the created order. Rani's personality type could be described as one who takes responsibility and order very seriously (Kroeger & Thuesen, 1989).

DSI-R SCALE

The DSI-R indicated that Rani might have difficulty maintaining emotional and mental composure when interacting with a family or workplace system (Skowron &

Friedlander, 1998). When intimidated she displays increased levels of emotional flooding, emotional lability, and hypersensitivity. Therefore, in any environment, Rani would most likely struggle to state personal desires and interests due to such hypersensitivity and emotional reactivity. However, according to the DSI-R and the emotional cutoff subscale, Rani struggles to manage the uncomfortable nature of intense emotional reactions to the point that she cannot stay within the system. The results of the DSI-R, in combination with the results of the MBTI, suggest that Rani would react negatively to a family or workplace system that does not follow well-established rules or expectations. Rani's low-level scores of self-differentiation indicate weaker emotional maturity and greater tension that leads to emotional cutoff. She maintains considerable emotional distance from those close to her, particularly from her mother and Vinod. There seems to be fusion with a higher level of emotional dependence on her brother and children. She has a higher level emotional reactivity (Skowron & Friedlander, 1998; Skowron, 2000; Elieson & Rubin, 2001; Skowron & Friedlander, 1998; Tuason & Friedlander, 2000), high levels of anxiety (Maynard, 1997; Kriegerlewicz, 2008), and marital discord (Kosek, 1998; Skowron, 2000). For Vinod, similar results were discovered in all variables except emotional cutoff from his father and triangulation with his mother.

SAFE SCALE

Rani's high scores on each of the three subscales of the SAFE scale indicate that she experiences stress related to real or perceived discrimination while engaging with the host country and its cultural practices, but that it has not alienated her from members of her native culture. At the same time, engaging with their native culture marginalizes her

from members of their host country. This inability to fully relate to people who do not share in her dual cultural identity becomes a critical issue, especially for Rani, who comes from a collectivistic culture and feels the need to belong (Kashima et al., 1995). Moreover, cultural alienation makes it difficult for her to embrace her acculturated Indian identity because she finds that it is associated with social exclusivity and other unfavorable behaviors. Finally, Rani displays bicultural competence but may find herself with high acculturative and adaptive stress.

Interpretation

Rani lost the attachment to her mother and reports that she felt like she was close to her aunt. Unfortunately, having lost her attachment figure, Rani sought to meet her attachment needs from others, such as her children. The early experiences of emotional abandonment by her mother may have led Rani to develop a sense of self characterized by the beliefs that she is not lovable, she does not have much to offer emotionally to others, and that she cannot trust others to meet her needs. She seems to have hypersensitivity and emotional reactivity and is defensive. The anger she experiences now may have originated earlier in her childhood as a defense mechanism, to cope with the intense pain generated by the early emotional deprivation from the primary caregiver. She avoids dealing with her emotions. This negative view of self and her detachment from her feelings makes it difficult for Rani to develop emotionally-satisfying, intimate relationships. She continues to improve her relationship with her mother by working on establishing a healthy attachment style. The result will most likely lead to increased differentiation and healthier attachment with all family members, especially Vinod.

Case Formulation

The concepts of Bowen Family Systems Theory (BFST) and Attachment Theory (AT) were used to construct a case formulation for the clients. Five of the eight concepts of BFST were used: differentiation of self, family projection, family emotional systems, generational transmission, and emotional triangles (Bowen, 1978; Freidman, 1985; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Attachment Theory was used to identify the client as presenting with either secure, anxious, avoidant, or disorganized attachment styles (Bowlby, 1998; Clinton & Sibcy, 2006, 2014). Each conceptual construct will include a component identifying possible ways the client's acculturative stress might affect their marital health.

Family Projection Process. For Vinod, his father placed on him the emotional stress he felt from the cutoff and estranged relationship he had with his father. For Rani, her mother is the likely cause of her emotional stress that she projects onto her husband. Vinod's and Rani's increased levels of emotional reactivity, as indicated by the DSI-R, and SAFE scale, are partially due to being labeled as identified patients. Vinod and Rani's marriage will most likely be one of increased emotional reactivity.

Family Emotional System and Homeostasis. The homeostasis of both Vinod's and Rani's families of origin was stable. However, stability did not equal healthy attachment. Vinod's mother was somewhat cut off from Vinod's father, as was Rani's mother from Rani's father. As a result, Vinod and Rani most likely entered marriage without the ability to engage in secure attachment, due to the lack of modeling of healthy attachment with their families of origin. The desire to create healthy homeostasis through

secure attachment is present within the couple, but they will have to work really hard to establish such a system.

Differentiation of Self. The DSI-R results for both Vinod and Rani suggest that each person will struggle to maintain an increased level of differentiation within their marriage. As a result of low differentiation, Vinod and Rani will most likely encounter difficulty in stating personal desires, needs, and wants (Bowen, 1978; Friedman, 1985; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). This suggested lack of honest communication could produce an increased level of emotional reactivity and stress. Their low levels of differentiation are an additional cause of their high level of emotional reactivity.

Generational Transmission. According to Vinod's genogram, lack of attachment with a father figure is a characteristic that is shared from one generation to the next. Rani's genogram also suggests that lack of attachment with a mother figure is shared from one generation to the next. Both persons with such generational transmission increase the likelihood that any possible son would struggle to attach to Vinod. This type of generational transmission also increases the possibility that Vinod will doubt his parenting skills and that Rani could quickly project her disappointment with her father onto Vinod's efforts to parent a son. The emotional climate present in the family of origin of Rani is transferred to children through generation transmission (Bowen, 2004).

Emotional Triangles. Vinod's father displaces the anxiety, existing between himself and Vinod's paternal grandfather, upon Vinod. Rani's genogram suggests that her mother is triangulating her with her aunt. Rani's mother is placing upon Rani the anxiety produced by the lack of attachment, discord, and cutoff.

Attachment Theory. Vinod's genogram suggests that he experiences avoidant attachment with his father but a secure attachment with his mother. Rani's genogram suggests that she experiences anxious attachment to her mother but a secure attachment to her father. Currently, Vinod and Rani display avoidant and anxious attachment with characteristics of insecure attachment being developed.

Acculturation theory. Acculturation Theory illuminates the challenges of Vinod and Rani. Family stress theory highlights the impact of acculturative stress on this couple's level of functionality within family system (marital distress). Vinod and Rani can navigate acculturative stress if during the stress one or both spouses realize that they have harmed the other. Acculturation has impacted Vinod and Rani in three ways: there has been behavioral shifts, acculturative stress, and emotional cutoff. When behavioral shifts took place, Vinod and Rani experienced dissatisfaction that resulted in more conflicts. It has taken a toll on Vinod and Rani's marital health, family functioning, family cohesiveness, emotional closeness and family intactness. Three major dimensions of acculturative stress that have particular relevance to this couple are: familial, attitudinal, and environmental (Fuertes & Westbrook, 1996; Goforth et al., 2014).

The interconnectedness is not present between Vinod and Rani, as such the family cohesion seems to be lacking in this couple. With the absence of sharing of interests, values, affection, and support, they experience separation and emotional cut-off from each other; which in turn, results in the breakdown of communication and reactive responses to stress, and leads to frequently blaming and showing hostility to one another. As Vinod and Rani resort to the use of avoidance coping strategies, this leads to emotional cutoff and hinders adaptation. Moreover, as Vinod and Rani could not fulfill

their roles effectively, their family encounters a phase of crisis (Hill, 1958). In the state of crisis, Vinod and Rani's family's equilibrium is overwhelmingly disturbed, and it disables and paralyzes the functionality of the family.

During the experience of acculturative stress, there are diverse events in the day-to-day life that challenges their understanding of culture and ways of living. These complex challenges experienced by the couple cannot be curbed just by adjusting or assimilating. It requires assistance especially with coping strategies to deal with the insurmountable stressors in their lives (Berry, 2006), thereby protecting their marital health from it is a negative impact and possible distress (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1989).

Diagnostic Impression

Z63.0 Relationship Distress with Spouse or Intimate Partner.

Qualifying Criteria

- Unhealthy patterns of attachment and low self-differentiation
- The acculturative stress and anxiety
- Avoidance without resolution of problems

Recommendations and Summary

It is suggested that Vinod and Rani contemplate the following recommendations to maintain holistic health as individuals and within their marriage.

1. Vinod: Enter into psychotherapy to identify acculturative stress or anxieties that underlie and learn coping strategies to deal with the negative effects of anxiety and stressors.

2. Vinod and Rani: Enter into marital counseling to increase levels of and develop more secure attachment styles within their marriage. The following theories could be beneficial to the couple:
 - a. Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy by Sue Johnson (2004).
3. Vinod and Rani: Create a plan to establish spiritual support—engage in a church and community for support, prayer, and accountability.
4. Vinod and Rani: Move toward a more secure attachment through the shared love of outdoor activities like camping and creative talents like music.

Both Vinod and Rani would benefit from the establishment of healthier patterns of attachment with their respective parents. There is an increased risk of low differentiation passing onto their children if the couple does not work to establish secure patterns of attachment.

As we transition to the Chapter 5, the writer would like to remind the reader of the main purpose of this thesis: to help the Christian Asian Indian immigrant couple increase their levels of marital health by identifying the acculturative stress, adopting coping strategies and support system to handle acculturative stress efficiently.

CHAPTER 5 - THERAPY AND OUTCOMES

Vinod, Rani, and their children, Anita and Raja, all agreed to participate in therapy sessions. This chapter will describe the couple therapy sessions with Vinod and Rani, and family therapy sessions with all four of them. The outcome is discussed following the description of the therapy sessions. Findings are interpreted and discussed in light of the two main theoretical frameworks that guided the study: Berry's (1987) Acculturation Model and Hill's (1958) ABC-X Model of Family Stress. The ABC-X Model (Hill, 1958) proposed that if a family fails to adequately cope with stressor events (A Factor, e.g., immigration) and lacks the B factor (e.g., resources), it could lead to problematic perception and consequently significant disruption within the family system. Social and spiritual support is considered a primary buffer factor of stress, which protects the marriage and family from possible distress and breakdown (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1989). Access to sufficient resources empowers the immigrant couple to function more smoothly when they experience acculturative stress and challenges in a new social context. This, in turn, prevents stress pile-up and leads to more effective coping and management of the external sources of acculturative stress (Boss, 2002; McKenry & Price, 2005).

Couples' Therapy

Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) is an evidence-based approach to treating couples who are in distress and is applicable to couples who experience acculturative stress. The effectiveness of EFT has been demonstrated in couples facing high levels of stress and has been shown to reduce depressive stress symptoms (Wiebe & Johnson, 2017). Furthermore, EFT helps to regulate the couples' neurophysiological stress

response. Johnson and Sanderfer (2016) state that “in these moments of safe connection, both partners can hear each other’s attachment cry and respond with soothing care, creating a bond that can withstand differences, wounds, and the test of time” (p. 58). The emotionally focused therapy uses attachment theory to establish emotional security between couples whose attachment bond is disrupted due to acculturative stress. Attachment theory has been a successful approach to couples’ therapy as it helps explain how adults need to depend on each other to be healthy (Nichols, 2013). The key moments of change in EFT are moments of secure bonding.

EFT is a short-term therapy that usually consists of 8-20 sessions. There are nine steps divided into three stages: Stabilization, Restructuring the bond, and Consolidation, and it aims to help couples foster a more secure attachment bond in their relationship, with the goal of improving relationship functioning. Johnson and Sanderfer (2016) offer a version of EFT for Christian couples based on seven conversations designed at encouraging a special kind of emotional responsiveness that is the key to lasting love for couples. The seven transforming conversations are as follows:

- Conversation 1: Recognizing the Demon Dialogues
- Conversation 2: Finding the Raw Spots
- Conversation 3: Revisiting a Rocky Moment
- Conversation 4: Hold Me Tight – Engaging and Connecting
- Conversation 5: Forgiving Injuries
- Conversation 6: Bonding Through Sex and Touch
- Conversation 7: Keeping Love Alive

The couple will participate in seven sessions which will cover the seven conversations listed above. With the use of EFT, Vinod and Rani will accomplish the following goals:

1. Expand and re-organize key emotional responses, that are the negative patterns of interaction in their relationship that have caused them to disconnect.
2. Create a shift in partners' interactional positions and initiate new patterns of interaction based on their understanding of their old negative patterns and triggers.
3. Form a secure emotional bond that will result in the reestablishment of their attachment relationship.
4. Identify their phase in the acculturative process and the stressors that affect their marital health.
5. Create a social network and spiritual support structure for themselves and their family.

INITIAL ASSESSMENT

Before starting the therapy sessions, the writer met with Vinod and Rani for an initial assessment. The goals for that assessment were as follows:

1. To create an alliance with Vinod and Rani where they both feel safe and accepted by me, and also to make them feel confident that they would be helped by the therapy sessions.
2. To assess the nature of the relationship and the problem.
3. To assess Vinod and Rani's goals for therapy.

The meeting began with greeting the couple. The day and time for future sessions were agreed upon by all parties. The writer explained to the couple that the type of

therapy they would be receiving is called Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy. An overview of the seven conversations was given to them, and all of their questions were answered. Vinod and Rani agreed to participate in couple therapy sessions for the fulfillment of the writer's requirements for the Doctor of Ministry program; therefore, outside of this thesis-project, information from the therapy sessions will be kept confidential.

Vinod and Rani were each asked to share their goals for therapy. Vinod's goal was for Rani to understand and respect him better. Rani's goals were: (1) to eliminate the control, demand and nagging she gets from her husband; and (2) to get more affection from her husband. The couple reported the joint goal of wanting to be able to relax and have harmony and peace at home. They were also asked to share what each of them feels is the problem in the relationship. Vinod defined the problem as his wife and children disrespecting him, and he feels isolated from them. Rani defined the problem as her husband's frequent nagging and control of her and the children. The role of the attachment bond in Vinod and Rani's affect or emotional regulation is a key focus of the EFT. On an individual level, attachment anxiety is associated with the couple's hyper-activation of their attachment emotions and signals, whereas attachment avoidance is associated with de-activating affect regulation. The negative interaction cycles of Vinod and Rani's pursue/withdraw characteristic of marital relationship distress (Johnson, 2004).

In the joint sessions, the writer assessed Vinod and Rani's perceptions of problems and strengths, negative and positive interaction cycles, relationship history and

key events, and attachment history in their relationship, as well as observed interactions in sessions and checked for abuse and violence.

Vinod's Family Genogram. We spent some time discussing Vinod's relationship with his father and developing a genogram of Vinod's family. Vinod told a story about his experiences with cricket, stating that he always played with fear. The naming of fear as emotion was an important first step in helping Vinod understand and express his fears to Rani. Vinod stated that regardless of his level of athletic performance, his dad was never pleased. We focused on three issues regarding Vinod's father: Vinod's desire for acceptance, the need for Vinod and Rani to establish boundaries between them and Vinod's father, and Vinod's love for sports in bonding with his father.

Vinod will need to work on trusting Rani's acceptance. The anxiety that Vinod is experiencing is due in large part to a fear of not being accepted. Vinod will also need to work on establishing boundaries with his father, as well as exploring the sporting realm to connect in a healing way with his father. Rani will need to work on showing Vinod unconditional support, respect, and love as Vinod wrestles with being accepted and approved of. If Rani can provide support, respect, and love, the emotional dance of their marriage will grow stronger and lead to higher levels of secure attachment and increased differentiation.

By adopting a streamlined version of EFT in the therapy sessions, Vinod and Rani walked through seven conversations that captured the defining moments in their love relationship and helped them shape these moments to create a lasting and secure bond.

CONVERSATION 1: RECOGNIZING THE DEMON DIALOGUES

The goal of this session was to identify Vinod and Rani's negative pattern of interaction, specifically the pattern that is causing the issue in their relationship. Johnson and Sanderfer (2016) list three patterns of demon dialogues that block couples from safely connecting with each other. The first is called "Find the Bad Guy" which is a pattern of mutual blame that drives the couple into separate space far from one another. It is also described as an attack-attack pattern. The second is called "the Protest Polka," which is the most common dance of relationship distress. In their specific relationship, this usually took the form of Vinod frequently using demands or criticism to make his point, and Rani trying to defend herself, but quickly getting overwhelmed, and then shutting down and withdrawing. It can also be described as a demand-withdraw pattern. The third is called "Freeze and Flee" which happens when both partners feel helpless. Neither is reaching for the other, neither is taking any risks, and both have to run for cover. It is also described as a withdraw-withdraw pattern.

Vinod began explaining the negative pattern of interaction. He reported that he goes to work for eight hours, commutes an hour and a half each way, and sometimes is on call on weekends while his wife and children are at home. When he returns home from work, no housework has been done. He feels his wife should do the weekly housecleaning on Sunday since she gets off from work on Sundays. In his family of origin, Sunday was designated as cleanup day, and he feels it should be the same with his wife and children. Vinod placed the blame on his wife's attention to the children and noted that the children take away most of her time. He wants his wife to train his children to do housecleaning because that is what his mother did with him. Vinod states that he

frequently nags because his wife does not do any chores at home. Instead, he claims that after an intense day at work, he comes home and wants to relax, but cannot when his family is watching YouTube videos on the TV. What helps him to relax is Indian movies and comedy shows; therefore, he isolates himself and goes to another room to relax. Now and then he organizes trekking with colleagues at work. Rani and the children enjoy American talk shows and watch more hours of video on YouTube and other digital outlets than TV channels, simply because they find them more enjoyable.

Rani says that while Vinod is on call or out with his friends trekking on Sundays, she and the children have family time or go shopping. In her family of origin, Sunday was the day to rest and was also designated as a family day. She continues to view Sunday as a day to rest and spend time with family, as she spends a lot of time with her aunt during weekends and enjoys shopping with her. In her family of origin, Rani did not have to do any chores at home growing up as they had two helpers at home. She attributes her lack of desire to do any chores as an adult to this, and she feels that he should allow her to hire someone to clean the house on a regular basis. Vinod refuses this option, which leaves Rani feeling that he should not nag and complain since he has refused her alternative option. She also disagrees with Vinod concerning the reason for his isolation. According to Rani, Vinod begins isolating himself when his demands are not met.

Rani feels that Vinod's dominance in family decision-making is reinforced by the way in which their incomes are allocated. Rani's salary tends to be allocated to buying food and children's clothing, whereas Vinod's salary is used for major expenses, such as cars and vacations. In this way, Rani says her income is tied up in domestic purchases,

while Vinod continues to have a greater say and has his way in all major family decisions as he uses his income for major purchases. When Rani is given decision-making power, it usually tends to be limited to the domestic arena or an area that is of little importance.

With the help of the therapist, Vinod and Rani identified the existence of two demon dialogues in their interaction with one another. Their first negative pattern is “Find the Bad Guy.” Vinod attacks Rani by blaming her for not making chores at home a top priority. In return, Rani attacks Vinod by blaming him for constantly nagging and isolating himself from her, and for his dominance in decision-making that is reinforced by the way in which their incomes are allocated. As explained by Johnson and Sanderfer (2016), this pattern of attack-attack is hard to maintain over an extended period, so couples move into the second demon dialogue pattern, “Protest Polka.” Vinod demands that his wife do chores at home. In response to his demand, Rani defends herself by saying Sunday is her rest and family day, and that she does not enjoy doing chores at home. Since Vinod has refused her alternative options for keeping the house clean, Rani withdraws and seeks no resolution for their conflict.

CONVERSATION 2: FINDING THE RAW SPOTS

According to Johnson and Sanderfer (2016), all of us have what they call a raw spot on our emotional skin. This raw spot is tender to touch, easily rubbed, and deeply painful. When our raw spot is scraped, it can bleed all over our relationship, causing us to lose our emotional balance and lead to unhealthy demon dialogues. Johnson and Sanderfer (2016) define a raw spot as “a hypersensitivity formed by moments in a person’s past or current relationships when an attachment need has repeatedly been

neglected, ignored, or dismissed, resulting in a person's feeling what I call the '2 Ds'—emotionally deprived or deserted" (pp.109-110).

The goals in this session were for Vinod and Rani to (1) identify their raw spot; (2) find the source behind their raw spot; and (3) recognize when their raw spot is rubbed. They both felt comfortable with the conversation and did not shy away from sharing the emotional content of the source behind their raw spot. Rani was able to share her story with Vinod without any help. Vinod had no trouble identifying his raw spot, but when it came to discussing the source, Rani provided the coaching, based on stories and feelings that Vinod had shared with her.

Vinod identified his raw spot as his relationship with his parents. One particularly raw area is the lack of attention his father paid to him and the subsequent rejection he felt from him. Vinod feels that the clutter in the home and Rani's withdrawal from him is what causes his raw spot to bleed. He associates clutter with the dysfunctional life of his childhood. His mom, who provided the only stability in his life while growing up, always provided a clean-living environment as well. Therefore, Vinod felt emotionally stable and connected to his mother when his house was clean. On the other hand, when his house is cluttered, he feels a loss of connection with his mother and more of an association with the homes of his parents. He also experiences rejection from Rani as he did from his dad. Rani identified her raw spot as her children. She lost her brother in an accident. When she and Vinod attempted to have children, she lost her first two through miscarriages. When she had a successful pregnancy, and her daughter was born, she considered her to be her miracle child. She was then blessed to have a second, a male child. However, having children changed the relationship between her and Vinod. Rani is more patient and wants

them to spend time with her as she had a dysfunctional relationship with her mother.

What causes her raw spot to bleed is: (1) when Vinod isolates himself from her and the children; and (2) his impatience with the children. Rani feels torn between having to choose between spending time with Vinod or spending time with her children.

CONVERSATION 3: REVISITING A ROCKY MOMENT

The goal of this session was for Vinod and Rani to revisit a rocky moment in their relationship and apply what they have learned from conversations 1 and 2 about the way they communicate and their attachment fears. I asked questions along the way to guide them through the process and help them with conflict resolution. They chose to revisit a time when Vinod went to pick up one of his colleagues at his home. While waiting for his colleague, Vinod noticed how clean and orderly the home was and how respectful his children were and it made him feel good. When he got home from work and entered his own home, it was not clean, and it made him feel angry. He proceeded to make a few sarcastic remarks and demanded Rani and the children to clean up the house. Rani and the children ended up in a screaming match with Vinod and chose to ignore his remarks and ignore Vinod as well for a significant portion of time afterward. Vinod fears that their children will acquire undesirable aspects of the new host culture and that their children will lose their own culture of respect. However, Rani says that at the same time, he actively encourages the children to acquire the characteristics of the new culture as he thinks that will lead to success. His conflicting desires and expectations for their children have been incredibly frustrating for Rani and the children. They seem to avoid or ignore his remarks or instructions.

When asked by the therapist how he could have handled his anger differently, Vinod stated he could have remained silent. I suggested to Vinod that he could have explained to Rani that he went inside a colleague's home and that it made him feel good to see the home clean. He could then have expressed to her that the feeling he got when he entered his colleague's home is the same feeling he wishes to feel when he enters his own home. Instead of ignoring Vinod's sarcastic remarks, Rani stated she could have told him how his remarks made her feel. Both Vinod and Rani recognized that their raw spot had been scraped during that particular incident and that is why they each reacted the way they did.

CONVERSATION 4: HOLD ME TIGHT – ENGAGING AND CONNECTING

In this session, Vinod and Rani had to share with each other the answers to two questions: (1) What am I most afraid of? (2) What do I need most from you? The goal was for Vinod and Rani to openly and coherently speak about their needs to each other in a way that invites the other into a new dialogue marked by accessibility, responsiveness, and engagement.

Vinod expressed to Rani that his greatest fear was losing his own culture. When he walks into a house that is unclean, he feels frustrated and angry, but mainly a loss of control. He admitted that an unclean house makes him feel like he cannot get back to his roots. When pressed by Rani to elaborate, Vinod acknowledged that what he needs most from Rani is for her to provide him a stable environment, like his mother did, by keeping the house clean and handing out chores. He wants to return home to a clean house where there is respect for his family of origin.

Rani expressed to Vinod that her greatest fear is becoming emotionally numb.

She explained that her tolerance for his nagging demands has decreased through the years. As a result, she has become less emotional about his nagging. At this point in their relationship, she just wants to make it stop. She declared that she feels like she and her kids cannot live up to Vinod's expectations. When he begins to nag, she snaps back with a comment and then withdraws from him. She does not seek to resolve the conflict because it is too painful for her. When I asked her to elaborate on her painful feeling, Rani shared that it is painful that Vinod does not notice what she does do. He chooses to focus on what she has not done. Therefore, she goes into defensive mode and withdraws.

What Rani needs most from Vinod is help with the cleaning and an emotional connection with him. She explained that in her family of origin, the two helpers did the chores in the house. She never had to do any cleaning while growing up. She feels that Vinod should do the housecleaning like her father did, mainly because he is the best at it and since, unlike her, he grew up cleaning the house on a regular basis. She expressed to him that she is more than willing to help him clean. If he is not happy with that option, she suggested Vinod allow her to hire someone to clean their house.

This session was an eye opener for Rani because she finally understood that her husband wants her to be like his mother. Although she understood what he wants, she also understood that she could not be like his mother. She admits that the best she can do is offer to make sure the house is clean, but to do so, Vinod must allow her to use the method that works best for her, including hiring a cleaning person. Vinod did not seem satisfied with any of the options presented by Rani. The writer believes the reason for Vinod's dissatisfaction is because what he truly wants from Rani is the same connection that he experienced with his mother. In other words, his request for a clean house and

respect from his children is a request for Rani to be his attachment figure. Vinod acknowledged his understanding of her fear and needs and acknowledged that he would have to get better at handling the situation. He recognized that their differences are a result of their experience in their family of origin.

CONVERSATION 5: FORGIVING INJURIES

The partners need a special type of healing conversation that fosters not just forgiveness, but the willingness to trust again. Renewed trust is the ultimate goal (Johnson & Sanderfer, 2016, p. 187). In this session, Vinod and Rani were encouraged to speak openly to each other about any pain or injury that the other has caused in the relationship. While the injured partner is speaking, the injuring partner must acknowledge the injured partner's pain and accept responsibility for his or her part in causing the injury.

Both Vinod and Rani agreed that they had no real injuries to discuss. Rather than injuries, they both were feeling frustration. They admitted that conversation 4 and their reflecting on the session afterward had helped them to reconnect because they now understand that neither has been seeking to cause personal injury, but rather their actions are a result of a family of origin influences.

CONVERSATION 6: BONDING THROUGH SEX AND TOUCH

The purpose of this session was to promote a practical approach to maintaining an emotional connection. According to Johnson and Sanderfer (2016), emotional connection creates good sex, and great sex creates a deeper emotional connection. When Rani spoke to her husband about her needs, one of the things she mentioned was needing more affection from him. She expressed that she would like to receive more kisses and

affectionate touching. The writer talked to Vinod and Rani about “the five love languages,” one of which is physical touch. The couple was encouraged to read *The Five Love Languages* book by Gary Chapman (1995) together to discover their love languages and then begin speaking in each other’s love language.

Rani did the majority of talking in this session as she expressed her need for more physical contact from her husband. Together they developed an action plan for bonding through sex and touch. Vinod agreed to initiate more hugging throughout the day. They agreed to share kisses before leaving their home for work and when they return home from work. To promote a healthier sex life, they agreed to have a weekly date night that would allow them to get close in the evening and finish off the night even closer.

CONVERSATION 7: KEEPING YOUR LOVE ALIVE

The goal of this last session was for Vinod and Rani to discuss ways to take their love into the future. Johnson and Sanderfer (2016) state that love is a constant process of reaching out to find the lost emotional connection. Vinod and Rani agreed to have a family conversation to talk with their children about keeping the house clean. They would like to implement a system where chores are divided among every member of the house. The children are like Rani in that they do not like to do the cleaning. Rani took responsibility for never making cleaning a priority with her children while they were growing up, and thus agreed to take the initiative to stress the importance of cleaning the home. This will help Vinod to feel more relaxed and comfortable in his own home.

Rani asked that Vinod would make an effort to spend more time with the family instead of isolating himself. Vinod acknowledged that he would make that effort. This will provide more bonding time for Vinod and Rani. As determined in conversation 6,

they would implement a weekly date night to promote a healthier sex life. Vinod would also be more intentional about showing affection to Rani through hugging, kisses, and random physical touch.

Family Therapy

Any stressful event that a family experiences (in this case acculturative stress) may strain the family relationship. Family therapy, also known as family counseling, can be useful in treating concerns that impact the mental health of the family, such as depression, substance abuse, and anxiety disorders (Padilla & Duran, 1995). Other family issues, such as communication problems, interpersonal conflict, or behavioral problems in children and adolescents, can also be treated with family therapy (Adelman & Taylor, 1993).

A structural family therapy approach was used with Vinod, Rani, Anita and Raja. The goal was to assess the structure and communication within the family and resolve any flaws in family structure and communication that might be preventing the family from doing housecleaning. The family participated in two sessions. The first session addressed the issue of household chores. The second session addressed the issue of Vinod's isolation from the rest of the family. Each family member was asked the same question about his or her perceptions of the same issue. By hearing from each family member, the writer was able to explore more deeply each family member's perception and feelings without being confrontational.

SESSION 1

The session began with the writer explaining to the family how the therapy session would be conducted, sharing with the family that because the cleanliness of the

house was a common theme discussed by each member of the family, the first session would address this family issue. The writer asked each member of the family to answer the following question: What do you see as the problem for the family with keeping the house clean?

Raja felt that the problem was that they had no system for cleaning time. They only cleaned the house when someone was coming over and even then, it was not a thorough cleaning. He stated that the house has too much stuff and his family refuses to discard. The rest of the family agreed with his claim. Raja does not feel that cleaning on Sunday is a solution to the problem. He thinks it is unfair for his dad to expect the house to be cleaned by his mom and children while he is trekking or camping and does not participate in the cleaning.

According to Anita, she grew up in the house always under pressure from her dad to do chores. She explained that she has learned to ignore and become numb to his pressure and, therefore, has no desire to clean her room or do any chores in the house. She shared how recently she did some cleaning in her room and had a large bag full of items to throw away. She admits that even when they are trying to throw things away, it does not seem to happen because the items are always rescued from the garbage bin. She also thinks it is unfair for her dad to ask others to clean while he does not participate himself.

Rani acknowledges that a lack of discipline is the reason why cleaning does not get done. She argues that everyone does not do what he or she can to keep the house clean. As for herself, she admits that it takes her too long to clean because she was never taught to do it growing up. She, in turn, did not make cleaning a priority for her children

while they were growing up, and thus accepts full responsibility for her children not being disciplined enough to do chores or housecleaning. She agrees with the children that it is not fair for Vinod to not be present on the day the family does housecleaning or laundry, especially since he is the one who is the best at it in the house.

Vinod feels the problem is a breakdown in transmitting to the children the importance and priority of doing housecleaning. He explained that in his family of origin, they did not have conversations about household chores. Instead, they were assigned their chores, and from there, they did them. He cannot understand why his wife and children have to spend time talking about household chores when they should just be able to do them.

After hearing each member of the family give their perspective, the writer moved the conversation in the direction of a solution. Anita was the first to offer a solution. She suggested that each person should be assigned an area of the house to clean. Each person would be responsible for making sure his or her area stays clean. Raja disagreed with Anita's suggested solution because he felt that before they can focus on an area to clean, they first needed to do a complete cleaning of the house to eliminate excessive things. Rani agreed with Anita's suggestion but added that a time restriction needed to be included. In other words, each person must clean his or her area daily or weekly or monthly. Rani further suggested that Vinod teach them the art of cleaning and doing laundry to provide a system for them since he has the most experience with cleaning and laundry. Vinod also agreed with Anita's solution and with Rani's suggestion.

To help unify the family, the writer suggested they schedule a cleanup weekend where the purpose would be to do a general cleaning that would result in purging

excessive things as suggested by Raja. After the general cleaning, they can assign each member of the family an area to keep clean on a regular basis as suggested by Anita. At that time, they would also decide if cleaning one's area would be done on a weekly basis or some other duration as suggested by Rani. Vinod would be responsible for developing a system that the family follows for both the general cleaning and maintenance cleaning of their area. All members of the family agreed to the suggestion.

SESSION 2

The writer shared with the family that because Vinod's isolation was another common theme discussed by each member of the family, the second session would address this family issue. The writer asked Rani, Anita, and Raja to answer the following question: How do you feel about your dad or husband isolating himself? Before they provided their answer; the writer invited Vinod to explain his reason for the isolation.

Vinod explained that his commute to work downtown and back home to the suburbs is very stressful because of the "crazy" drivers. He has been sitting in a car all day and dealing with a demanding technology job with high-stress deadlines. Therefore, when he comes home, he just wants to relax and unwind. He knows that his family enjoys watching programs and movies that make it difficult for him to relax, so he goes to his room to watch either Indian movies or comedy which help him relax.

Anita shared that in the beginning, she saw her dad's isolation as a problem, but once he explained his reason to her, she took on a different perspective. She now believes that he isolates himself only to unwind and not because he does not want to be around the family. Whenever she wants to spend time with her dad, she goes to his room and joins him in watching whatever he is watching. She admits to wishing that when she joins him,

they could watch what she likes from time to time and not always watch sports or comedy. She also admits that she feels that the family has to enter into her dad's world more than he makes an effort to enter into their world.

Raja claims his dad's isolation does not bother him as much anymore. He feels the reason why it is a theme for everyone is that when everyone in the family gets upset, they go to their room except for his mother. He feels that they are mentally associating his dad being in his room as him being upset when that is not the case. Raja admits that as a working adult, he no longer has time to watch television with the family anyways, so he is absent frequently as well.

Rani views Vinod's isolation as a problem for several reasons. First, she explained that when she and the children are having a discussion together, Vinod sometimes walks into the family room and joins the discussion. The resulting problem is that he makes comments without knowing the full conversation, and, therefore, an argument often ensues. Second, she feels he needs to be more intentional about spending time with his family. She agreed with Anita that the family has to enter into his world more than he makes an effort to enter into their world. Third, she confessed that it makes her feel torn because she has to choose between spending time with her husband and spending time with her children. She is also torn because she views the bedroom as the place for sleeping, and therefore, does not want to spend the day in the bedroom watching television.

After listening to Rani, Anita, and Raja share their feelings, the writer gave Vinod the floor and asked him to respond to his family and provide a solution. Vinod acknowledged that what he heard from his family was that he needed to find a balance

between spending time alone to relax and spending time with his family. He agreed to do more family activities such as riding bikes or going out to dinner. The writer suggested some other family activities that Vinod could spend time doing with his family. Rani, Anita, and Raja were excited to hear Vinod commit to having more family time.

Outcomes

COUPLES' THERAPY

Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy was an effective therapy for Vinod and Rani. The seven conversations helped them to discuss problem areas in their relationship that they were avoiding. The change happened during the end of conversation 4. It was during that conversation that they both finally understood that the roots from their family of origin were deep. Rani knew more about Vinod's background than he seemed to know about hers. Knowing as much as she does about his background, it was an eye opener for her to discover that her husband wanted her to love him as his mother had loved him.

The strength of attachment theory is on display in this relationship. Vinod never formed an attachment to his father, but he did form a strong attachment to his mother, who served as his primary caregiver. Thus, his mother, as his attachment figure, was a haven for him and provided him with security. While his mother represented safety, security, and stability, his father represented the opposite. As an adult, Vinod's childhood caregiver attachment was transferred to his romantic relationship with Rani. The same secure relationship he had with his mother, Vinod now looks to have with Rani, his new attachment figure. During one of the sessions, Vinod shared that he has trouble sleeping whenever Rani goes out of town on business, leaving him to sleep alone. This indicates that she indeed is his haven, as well as his source of security and stability.

Both Vinod and Rani agreed that their relationship changed once they had children. When it comes to the house not being clean or the cooking not being done on a regular basis, Vinod blames his wife and children but especially emphasizes his children's lack of effort. He views their inability to keep the house clean as a lack of appreciation for the stable life that he has provided them. Vinod's focus on his children leads the writer to wonder if Vinod subconsciously views his children as a threat to his attachment relationship with Rani.

In the attachment relationship with his mother, Vinod developed internal working models that influenced how he feels about household chores, who should do the housework, cooking, and laundry, and when it should be done. As a result, Vinod brought into his new relationship with Rani the expectation that when it came to cleaning the house, his new family would operate in the same fashion as his family of origin, with Rani in the role of his mother. Vinod's expectation placed undue pressure on his wife and children for years. Because this expectation was not being met, Vinod struggled to maintain a connection with his family. He also experienced the rejection of his father again through Rani rejecting to do household chores.

Rani grew up in a home where she had an insecure attachment to her mother. The only secure relationship she had growing up was with her aunt. Unfortunately, the connection was severed when her aunt got married and moved out of state from Rani's home. In her current home, Rani's attachment needs are not being met by Vinod, but by her children. She wants to have a connection with Vinod that involves her receiving daily affection from him. During the therapy sessions, Rani and Vinod were able to reconnect emotionally and implement a pattern of interaction that will help them maintain their

emotional bond. Rani's connection with Vinod should dissolve the triangle relationship with her children; thus, allowing the husband-wife relationship to be the primary attachment relationship for both parties.

Vinod and Rani's unmet attachment needs created negative interactional cycles and increased their sense of disconnection and abandonment. Their relationship became an unsafe one. The couple suffered from a deep sense of insecurity, stress and attachment injuries due to unmet needs. When their attachment relationship became more secure, it was able to serve as a haven in times of stress. Attachment insecurity, however, hindered these functions and impeded the ability of their relationship to serve as a source of emotional balance and positive affect or emotional regulation.

When Vinod encountered moments of deep disappointment with Rani, his primary attachment patterns of avoidance from early childhood resurfaced. Vinod became increasingly self-protective, which resulted in undermining differentiation in Rani, and he used unsuccessful coping strategies such as blame and withdrawal. In his attempts to calm this anxiety, he reverted to insecure/avoidance attachment patterns. Due to poor differentiation and insecure attachment patterns, their marital health suffered, and they experienced marital distress.

The writer believes that Vinod would benefit from having individual therapy to address the feelings he still struggles with concerning his father. Individual therapy would help Vinod to finally have some level of peace about his childhood and bring closure and healing to the attachment injury or wounds of abandonment and rejection. Rani could also benefit from individual therapy to address any unresolved issues she might have with her mother. Vinod and Rani will develop resilience and manage their

inevitable differences to find solutions that incorporate their spouse's desires when they learn to strengthen their differentiation and be authentic and open with one another without compromising their core values and beliefs. In this way, differentiation will add to the strengthening of Vinod and Rani's attachment and synergy will develop to support ongoing closeness and connection.

FAMILY THERAPY

Getting the household chores done was a major issue for the family in this case study. Every member of the family admitted that it was an issue, and they wanted help with the situation. Family therapy gave them the help that they needed. It provided an opportunity for each member of the family to be heard without backlash or criticism. With the help of the therapist, they were able to identify the breakdown in their family structure and communication patterns. In the past, the family had attempted to create a solution for their housecleaning issue, but each time they were unsuccessful. Family therapy helped them to listen to one another and acknowledge the feelings of each family member. They also gained an understanding of expectations. As a result, barriers to communication were removed, and the family was able to successfully create a solution for household chores like cooking, cleaning the house, and laundry.

The discussion about Vinod's isolation was much needed. When people fail to communicate, assumptions are made which can be inaccurate and lead to major issues. Rani, Anita, and Raja needed to hear directly from Vinod the reason why he isolates himself. Vinod needed to hear directly from his wife and children how they each felt about his isolation. Vinod's isolation affected Rani more than it did Anita and Raja. While the children had adjusted to their dad's isolation, Rani had not. She admitted to

being torn. In couples' therapy, Vinod and Rani agreed to implement into their schedule a date night which that will let them spend more time together for bonding. This bonding time should also help with Rani feeling torn since it will increase the amount of time she spends with Vinod. Instead of trekking with his colleagues at work, Vinod and Rani will schedule outdoor couple or family activities like camping and bicycle that they enjoyed as a couple during their early years of marriage before their kids were born.

What stood out in the family therapy sessions was how the family looked at Vinod as their leader. They needed him to lead them in learning how to do household chores like cleaning, cooking, and laundry. They needed him to lead them in developing a system for these chores. They needed him to lead them when it comes to family activities. The family therapy sessions were a cry from Vinod's family for him to lead them. Despite the constant pressure he placed on them, the nagging, his conflicting desires and expectations as well as his isolation, they still had respect for Vinod as the head of the family and wanted him to know that he was their leader, and they were willing and ready to follow his lead.

Application of ABC-X Model of Family Stress and Coping

In the context of family systems, a theory that examines family dynamics as they relate to couple and family adaptations to stressors is the ABC-X model, the writer incorporated the ABC-X model (Hill, 1973) to help Vinod and Rani navigate and identify their specific stressors, explore their family resources, and evaluate their individual or family's perception of these stressors, to equip them to be more proactive in adapting and coping with stress. There have been changes in Vinod and Rani's family system, regarding family values, roles, functions, power distribution and boundaries.

Simultaneous occurrences of these internal or external stressful events led to stress pileup (Boss, 2002; McKenry & Price, 2005), which significantly reduced Vinod and Rani's resiliency and coping abilities, resulting in marital distress or a family crisis (Boss, 2002). It was evident that the couple's immigration and acculturation process was:

1) a nonnormative event that was highly stressful because of the unpredictability of the immigration process and its duration,

2) ambiguous, as Vinod and Rani were unable to identify or clarify what changes were happening in their family, to whom, and for how long,

3) volitional event, as Vinod, chose to come to the United States before he married Rani, and nonvolitional for Rani, as she did not have a choice which caused more strain on their relationship.

Three potential sources for family resources include the individual, the collective-family, friends, and the community. Individual resources for the couple include their intelligence, education and acquired skills, personality characteristics, attachment pattern, physical and psychological health, and self-esteem (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1989; McKenry & Price, 2005). One important family resource is family support or cohesion. Unfortunately, Vinod and Rani tended to ignore each other's needs, their shared interests, values, affection, and support was absent, which resulted in them becoming dysfunctional and non-supportive. Moreover, as interconnectedness was not present between Vinod and Rani, they were non-cohesive. They were reactive to stress, frequently blaming and showing hostility to one another. Vinod and Rani were encouraged to schedule 5-10 minutes of time together every day to be intentional in facilitating togetherness. This time was just for the two of them, without any interruptions from children or other

distractions, like cell phones. The first week, there was some resistance, as they said they could not have such time due to their life and work demands. The next week, there was a more conscious effort by the couple and more conversations. The goal was not to wait until an emotional crisis occurs, but instead to develop positive emotional muscle memory, by practicing rituals that would regularly help them deal with stress better (Cytowic, 2012).

Another prominent family resource is adaptability or flexibility. Vinod and Rani seemed to be very rigid and were unable to remain stable. Changes in family demands and work responsibilities increased their risk of experiencing stress, dysfunction, and eventual crisis (Madden-Derdich & Herzog, 2005), and they were not able to develop coping strategies and resilience to the crisis (Hawley & DeHann, 1996; McCubbin, McCubbin, Thompson, & Allen, 1997).

A third significant family resource is effective communication (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1989), which is the family's ability to exchange both content and emotions. In Vinod and Rani's case, as the communication had broken down, there had not been any affirming pattern of communication or mutual support, but rather disagreement, yelling, and harsh words. An effective plan was drawn to work on the couple's level of communication through the speaker-listener XYZ technique (Markman et al., 1994), where each person takes turns speaking while his or her partner listens and paraphrases what the speaker said. It is an effective way of communicating during conflict. Vinod and Rani were encouraged to identify what they were feeling and their desires based on their feelings, and to use the words "I need" as an effective first step at fostering deeper levels of effective conversations.

The writer also worked with the couple on interconnecting with sharing of affection and interests, by not only educating the couple with Gary Chapman's (1995) *The Five Love Languages*, but also having them identify their love language, the language in which they best receive love. As part of their homework, Rani was asked to rank her love language and have her guess the ranking of Vinod's. Vinod was also asked to rank his love language and have him guess the ranking of Rani's. They were asked to compare their lists and discuss how each one can express the other's language of love. Based on their report, Vinod's love language is words of affirmation and Rani's is quality time. They were also encouraged to participate in joint family activities, especially outdoor activities that they enjoyed earlier in their marriage.

Once the responses were completed as homework, it was reviewed and discussed. The main objective was to help the couple alter their perception of a problem. This involved clarifying the issues in the situation, reducing their emotional or reactive responses due to the stressor event, and encouraging them to adapt and persevere through the event.

As Vinod and Rani view the world as a random or unfriendly place, a stressor of acculturation is more overwhelming than believing that God has opened new opportunities for a greater purpose. I guided the couple to the meaning-making process, perception (C Factor in the ABC-X model) where Vinod and Rani appraise the situation and consider their available resources (Hill, 1958). Indeed, the meaning that Vinod and Rani formed while encountering stressful events, such as immigration and acculturation, could be defined as the couple's perception or understanding of the event. They were

encouraged to define the immigration or acculturation process positively so that they would be more likely to cope and adapt to the situation.

As life piled up demands and stretched Vinod and Rani's individual and family's resources to their limits, the only way the couple could effectively cope was to redefine the situation, so it seemed manageable and valuable. The writer enabled the couple to find new meaning by helping them see faith as an important factor in managing their acculturative stress, and seeing the need to clarify pressing issues and hardships from God's perspective through the 'renewal of mind' as Romans 12:1-2 puts it. Redefining the situation also helped the couple form a positive appraisal of the situation as an "opportunity for growth" as opposed to a "devastating crisis" that promoted adaptation. Moreover, redefining the problem decreased the intensity of their reactive responses associated with the crisis and encouraged Vinod and Rani to have a happier, more supportive and healthier home environment.

It is important to recognize that most Asian Indian immigrant families seek strength, support, comfort and guidance in troubled times, and connections with their cultural and spiritual traditions during times of crisis (Walsh, 2009). Religion is considered to be the primary sources of strength for the Asian Indian immigrants. John Ortberg (2005), the Teaching Pastor of Menlo Park Presbyterian Church states, "If churches became marriage mentoring centers, it would create a revolution in our society" (p. 42). Spiritual resources through faith, practices through prayer and meditation of Scripture, and congregational involvement are found to be sources of resilience (Walsh, 2009). A qualitative study was done to explore transformations of religiosity experienced by Danish Pentecostals following a crisis and religiously integrated group psychotherapy.

The findings suggested that all participants encountered a secondary religious transformation following the personal crisis or religiously integrated group psychotherapy (La Cour, Buus & Hvidt, 2016). Moreover, spiritually integrated treatments are more effective than control conditions and are as effective as other secular treatments (Azhar & Varma, 1995; Paukert, Phillips, Cully, Romero, & Stanley, 2011; Smith, Bartz, & Richards, 2007; Wachholtz & Pargament, 2008). Aponte (1994) states many families who feel trapped by their life stressors lose hope. This despair robs them of meaning and purpose. Instead of being trapped in a powerless victim position, the couples can be meaningfully engaged by the church or faith-based marriage programs. Rituals and ceremonies facilitate transitions and linkage with a larger community and common heritage. Although some families are more vulnerable or face more crisis than others, all seem to have the potential for gaining resilience in meeting their acculturative stressors. The faith-based programs foster family empowerment as they bring forth shared hope, develop new competencies, strengthen family bonds and cohesion.

The ABC-X model has helped the writer to conceptualize how characteristics of Vinod and Rani's families and their environment interact to explain how challenging events like immigration and acculturation has impacted their marital and family health. In a therapeutic context, the ABC-X model provided a structure through which the writer helped Vinod and Rani identify stressor event(s), explore possible resources (spiritual, psychological, and social), and evaluate the perception they attribute to the stressor(s) and their resources. It has also helped reframe their perception, help their family view the

problem differently to encourage more proactive and productive behaviors to successfully cope with acculturation.

Six months after the last session, the writer asked to meet with the couple to assess their development as a couple and to inquire about their marital health. Vinod and Rani talked about how their change in their perception, trusting God with new opportunities, and support from their familial, social and spiritual support system during their challenging time of acculturation have started shaping their marriage and helped in building a healthy home environment. The session ended with Vinod and Rani thanking the writer for the care and counsel during such a challenging season in their life. They asked to possibly meet again in six months time, and the writer agreed.

Post-Counseling Assessment

The following is the post-counseling assessment of Vinod and Rani by the writer:

- Vinod and Rani increased in their understanding of each other and sharing of emotions through counseling. The increased understanding and sharing of emotions resulted in what Johnson (2004) called a successful restructuring of the relationship.
- Vinod and Rani were able to navigate through stressors, accommodate changes and effectively support each other with a healthy level of communication and adaptability. Thus, the more secure attachment was established.
- Vinod and Rani were open with one another, exchanged differing opinions, showed respect for each other, and resolved conflicts with each other and their families of origin. Their expressed honesty was a marked improvement of

differentiation for both because they were able to individually state their desires in front of their respective parents.

Conclusion

As the Christian Asian Indian Immigrant population continues to grow, so does the need to study how marriage as an institution is doing among immigrants.

Acculturation may function as an independent stressor because it causes the less-acculturated spouse to feel less capable of managing her/his new cultural environment and forces her/him to be dependent on his/her more-acculturated spouse. Feelings of personal isolation and alienation may lead to marital conflict.

For Vinod and Rani, the pressures to acculturate may set into motion a variety of stressors associated with changes in language, gender roles, decision-making, conflicting gender role expectations and values that may result in increased levels of marital conflict and distress. The differential effects of acculturation and acculturative stress indicate that the couple has come to recognize divorce as a coping response that is available to them. Further, without the negative stigma that was once attached to divorce, Asian Indian women may see divorce as a viable coping response to marital conflict (Jamwal N.S, 2009). Thus, while acculturative stress may enhance marital discord, acculturation itself may motivate a couple to see divorce as a way to end an unhappy situation.

As a result of interest in the effect of acculturative stress on the marital and familial health of Asian Indian immigrant couples, and working with Vinod and Rani's family, the writer was able to realize the importance of the individual, familial, spiritual and community support for effective coping and adaptability. The writer would like to

take the findings and turn them into a resource for any church that would like to educate, equip and enrich the Asian Indian immigrant couple's marital and spiritual growth.

The writer highlights the fact that working with the support of the church; the Asian Indian Christian couples can achieve added strength and spiritual nourishment. As couples work together with similar experience with acculturation, they create new bonds of love and friendship and strengthen their own relationship. It is essential that marriage enrichment or marriage repair, and intervention programs or support groups be available in churches and communities that offer culturally-appropriate services with the integration of God's truth and psychological principles in coping, adaptability, and resilience of marriage and family relationships. Promoting marriage enrichment faith-based program provides and equips the Asian Indian immigrant couples with effective tools for coping with acculturation or other life stressors.

Here is a brief outline of possible marriage and family enrichment curriculum that would equip and enrich immigrant couples with tools to strengthen marriage and family adaptation to life stressors (e.g., acculturation).

The possible curriculum would follow an outline similar to the one below:

- Session 1: Theology of Family: God's Blueprint/ Design
- Session 2: Getting to Know Your Family
- Session 3: Family Stress and its Effect
- Session 4: Strengthening Your Family: Resources
- Session 5: Developing Communication & Conflict Resolution
- Session 6: Restructuring & Shaping Communication
- Session 7: Developing Intimacy

- Session 8: Developing Adaptability in Marriage
- Session 9: Cultivating Family Harmony
- Session 10: Bonding & Strengthening Your Marriage: Lasting Love

In summation, results from this thesis-project demonstrated that the marital health of the Christian Asian Indian immigrant couple was influenced by stressors the couple was experiencing with the immigration process, the resources they used to cope with those stressors, and their sense of coherence about their acculturation process. The writer observed that the family of origin strongly affects how Asian Indian immigrant couples encounter stressor events in their life. The writer began this thesis process with a general notion that differentiation determines attachment styles. However, after exploring Vinod and Rani's marital and family health, the writer has come to accept that attachment styles determine a differentiation. Both Vinod and Rani experienced insecure attachment with their father and mother respectively and the result was that Vinod lacked self-confidence and Rani had low ability to trust. Furthermore, the writer applied the principles of EFCT and noticed that Vinod and Rani struggled with identifying and communicating their emotions and the desires that went along with those emotions. Once the couple was able to identify what they were feeling and their desires based on their feelings, the writer was able to work on providing helpful ways to foster more profound levels of emotionally intimate conversation that ultimately results in effective communication.

Finally, the writer started this journey with the ABC- X Family Stress theory and did not set out to study the role of the church or faith-based programs in enriching or strengthening Christian marriages. However, with Vinod and Rani's marital health thriving after they engaged in the church-based family enrichment program, the writer

stresses the importance of fostering effective faith-based marital enrichment programs in church communities as an effective coping strategy and resource for strengthening Christian Asian Indian immigrant marriages. This can take the form of family ministry teams working together with church leaders in building and implementing family enrichment programs for strengthening the marriages of Christian Asian Indian immigrant couples. These programs must be built around biblical principles in order to effectively navigate a journey of healing and wholeness, improved relationships of couples, family cohesion and eventually a long-lasting marital satisfaction. Churches offer a sense of belonging (Kamya, 2009), thereby ministering to “the spiritual need (meaning), the social need (belonging), and the psychological need (comfort)” (Hurh & Kim, 1990; Coehlo, Yuan, & Ahmed, 1980), and meet the varied needs by providing a wide range of programs such as potluck suppers, choir singing, community outreaches, marriage and parenting skill workshops, programs for teens and youths, and counseling. The home church has played a pivotal role in providing this couple an opportunity of involvement in the faith community. They were able to meet people from the same country, which in turn reinforced their sense of self and affinity to their native culture; whereas contact with people from the host culture facilitated the entry into the host culture. Thus, the church-based family program enriched their family relationships, helped the couple find meaning and purpose, reframed their perception, and helped them find spiritual support and strength. Their relationship began to heal and thrive by tapping into the reservoir of hope, meaning, purpose and inspiration.

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